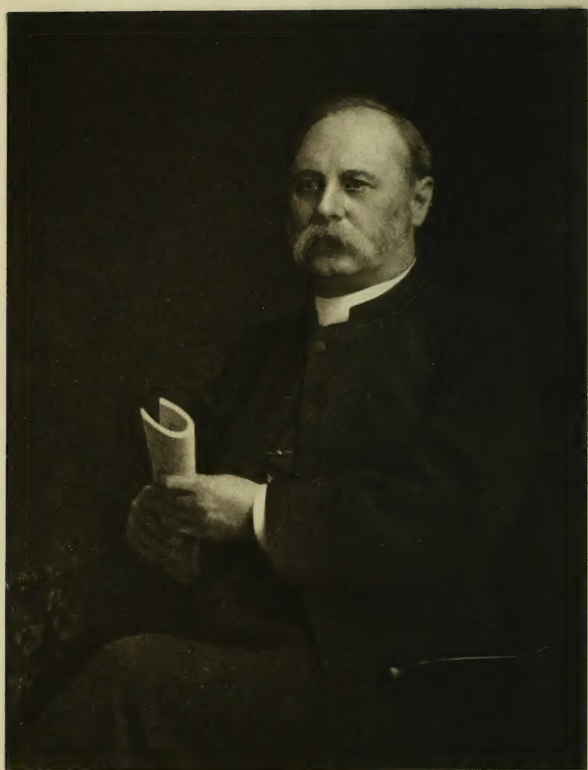


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THE LETTERS OF
JAMES MACDONALD



Yours truly
T. W. Macdonald

THE LETTERS OF
JAMES MACDONALD
1816-31

WITH NOTES BY HIS GRANDSON
FREDERIC W. MACDONALD

London
ROBERT CULLEY

2 CASTLE ST., CITY RD., AND 26 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

PRINTED BY
HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LD.,
LONDON AND AYLESBURY,

Div. 5.
922.742
M135

PREFATORY NOTE

THE letters of my grandfather, James Macdonald, which had been carefully preserved, came into my possession many years ago on the death of my father, George Browne Macdonald. Most of them are addressed to his sons, James and George; some to his friend and colleague, the Rev. Joseph Benson. They were not written with any thought of publication, and have never been made public in any way until now. They are, I think, interesting and valuable for various reasons. Portraiture of life and delineation of character, when made with simplicity and sincerity, are always attractive, as literature bears abundant witness. And, of all forms of portraiture, that which is of the nature of autobiography has the greatest charm.

The qualities of James Macdonald's mind and heart are clearly revealed in his correspondence, while the surroundings amid which he lived are probably better indicated than if he had set himself to describe them. He was essentially an intellectual man and a student, a lover of learning, refined in his tastes, and disliking everything that was hasty, crude, and unbalanced in thought, or irreverent in spirit. Amid privations and difficulties in his earlier years he began the study of languages, and continued it to old age. With little or no assistance from others he became a good Latin scholar, and learnt enough Greek and Hebrew to read the Scriptures in the original tongues, and to profit by scholarship and criticism. He acquired an excellent knowledge of French, and could read Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Books were his greatest earthly delight, giving him happiness second only to that which comes from the highest, or springs from the deepest, of all sources.

His piety was of a fine type, intelligent, manly, and strong. Immovable in respect of fundamental and central beliefs, holding Methodist doctrine in its best and purest form, he hated religious affectations and exaggerations,

loved what was good wherever he found it, was tolerant in judgement, sympathetic in spirit, and sensible in all things. In temperament he was cheerful and sanguine, and was distinguished for his conversational powers. Some pleasant traditions of the buoyancy of his spirits and the brightness of his wit still survive.

In my judgement of these letters there may perhaps be the pardonable overestimate of one who regards his grandfather as the founder of his family, and the creator of a tradition by which his own life has been profoundly affected ; but I think I may claim for them that they reveal an admirable personality, and a type of life which it may surprise some to find in the modest household of a Methodist preacher in the early part of the nineteenth century.

It is not my purpose to write a biography of my grandfather, but merely to furnish such notes to his letters as will make them more intelligible. I will only add that James Macdonald was born of Scottish parents in the year 1761, at Ballynamallard, near Enniskillen, in the north of Ireland. He entered the Methodist ministry in 1784, travelled

eleven years in Ireland, and removed to England in 1795. He became a supernumerary in 1826, and died at Gosport, October 18, 1835.

FREDERIC W. MACDONALD.

LETTERS

I

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,

*Mr. Bridge's Academy, Heywood Hall, Near
Bury, Lancashire*

' LONDON, *October 12, 1816.*

' YOUR very satisfactory letter came to hand last Wednesday according to agreement, and you may be sure that it afforded us unspeakable pleasure. You did well to write it so as to be fit for the perusal of your friends, several of whom have seen it, and in particular the Miss Bradburns. You travelled very judiciously, though necessity was the cause of your doing so. There is undoubtedly more *innocent*, nay *useful* necessity in the world than many imagine.

' I felt very solitary the night after your departure ; but you know that I have a tolerably accommodating mind, which, through the divine blessing, enabled me in a short time

to be pretty comfortable. The thought that, to a certain extent, you were in the way of obtaining the object of your wishes afforded me innocent consolation. I do not wonder that you wandered out of your way to see Kirkstall Abbey, though I should not have done so.

‘ Poor George ! In the Methodist Society ! ! The tears started into my eyes when I received the pleasing intelligence. Let him only be truly pious, and he will be, “ take him for all in all,” a surprising youth. I am well pleased with his progress in learning, and particularly that he is writing, and as you tell me, “ well,” a Prize Essay. Did you give him any assistance ?

‘ I am glad that you are so much pleased with Mr. and Mrs. Martindale. You said nothing about Mr. Crowther.

‘ You will naturally wish to know something of the economy we have adopted since your departure. I have settled with our Brewer, and we take no more table beer. I told the man with whom I settled that we should use it no longer. I feel, since I gave up the use of it, that I have a better appetite for my food, and have reason to think that I am stronger. Our financial concerns are in an excellent way, so that I shall be able by-and-by to send

you some money. You will find the change, notwithstanding all your philosophy, from London to Heywood Hall, rather strange for a time ; but custom reconciles us to everything save positive misery.

‘ It seems that I shall, after all, have to draw up Mr. Bradburn’s character, as Dr. Clarke seems not disposed to undertake it. Now I request you to take a large sheet of paper, and fill most of it with your view of his character. By doing this you will afford me material assistance. Consider, *first*, his natural talents, and the disadvantages which in early life he laboured under, and how he surmounted difficulties ; *second*, his conversion and call to the ministry ; *third*, his general knowledge ; *fourth*, his extraordinary talents for the pulpit ; *fifth*, his eccentricities, and account for them ; *sixth*, his generosity ; *seventh*, his prudence, and disinterestedness in refusing advantageous offers (in a temporal sense) to accept settled congregations ; *eighth*, his last days and death.

‘ Mary Ann and Jane join in kind love to you. Present my kind love to Mr. and Mrs. Atkinson, Mr. Livesey, and, above all, to Mr. and Mrs. Bridge.’

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NOTES

At the time of writing this letter Mr. Macdonald had been for five years Assistant Editor with Mr. Benson, and had almost sole charge of the *Methodist Magazine*. His wife, the mother of his children, had died some ten months previously, and was buried in the graveyard of Wesley's Chapel. Her grave immediately adjoins that of Wesley. His family consisted of two sons and two daughters. His eldest son, James, to whom this letter was written, was twenty years of age, and was assistant master at a school in Lancashire. His youngest son, George, was eleven years old, at Woodhouse Grove School, and had just become a 'member of Society.' His two daughters, Mary Ann and Jane, aged respectively sixteen and thirteen, were living with their father.

The Rev. Samuel Bradburn, President of the Conference in 1799, perhaps the most extraordinary natural orator that Methodism has known, died July 26, 1815. Mr. Macdonald was his intimate friend, and wrote the sketch referred to for the *Memoirs* of Samuel Bradburn.

II

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘LONDON, *October 31*, 1816.

‘YOUR every letter affords me great pleasure. I am glad that you have been to Manchester, and doubt not that in the course of time you will be invited to see some more of my old friends. Wherever we are, we may, in a qualified sense, assert :

Still to *ourselves in every place assigned*,
Our own felicity we make or find.

‘I am absolutely, I believe, growing lusty ; nor do I know that I have been better than of late for several years. The girls are now out in the town with Miss Slater, whose attention and kindness to them seem to increase daily. I have written a rough draft of more than one half of Mr. Bradburn’s “Character.” I wish I could send it to you for your observations before its going to press. I do not find it

near so difficult a task as I expected ; but what will not Resolution effect ! Will you believe it !—*I have laid snuff completely aside !* It is now two days since I took any ; nor do I feel any inconvenience from the want of it. In writing about it, however, I feel at this moment the old desire for it ; but I keep none, and can, through mercy, deny myself. I think you will be pleased with this piece of intelligence. *May I never relapse !* We manage the carving business as well as might be expected from such inexperienced hands, and we live well, but at the same time *economically*.

‘ You will see in the December *Magazine* my account of Thomas Taylor, and you will discern that I took some pains in drawing it up. I am astonished at your having read two books of Virgil in about eight days. Be sure to take sufficient exercise, and never allow yourself time for lowness of spirits.

November 1. 10 A.M.

‘ *Victory over snuff still maintained !* A hard struggle last night, but came off unhurt.

‘ *Almost one o’clock.*

‘ A couple of fresh herrings frying for dinner—rather hungry, but still *no snuff ! !*

‘I have just read the third sheet of Mr. Bradburn’s *Memoirs*. Surely it is an honest, savoury account. Mr. Benson and the Preachers in general know that I am to write his “Character.” I do not intend to add my signature. What think you? Much might (were people idle enough to investigate the subject) be urged on both sides.

‘The girls send you their best love.’

NOTES

The account of Thomas Taylor referred to, which may be found in the *Methodist Magazine* for December, 1816, is still worth reading. It gives a fine glimpse of a bygone day, and of a type of Methodist preacher that helps to explain the early history of Methodism. Mr. Taylor was a ‘travelling preacher’ for fifty-five years. ‘Next to Mr. Wesley, he filled the place of an effective man considerably longer than any other Methodist preacher.’

Mr. Macdonald makes the following reflection: ‘The present race of Methodist preachers knows from experience little or nothing of the difficulties with which the first race had to contend. Hunger, cold, weariness,

bad lodgings, and persecution in various forms were their lot. He lived long enough to see Methodism in comparative honour, and himself and brethren, in general, comfortably provided for. We cannot see the heroes of Methodism, however aged, drop, one after another, into eternity without being sensibly affected. We love, nay, we venerate the memory of those men of God who, with little less than apostolic intrepidity, in breaking up the ground which we now peaceably occupy, endured many a fight of affliction. But they rest from their labours, and we are hastening to the conclusion of ours.'

On the last day but one of his life, being then eighty years of age, Mr. Taylor preached at Bolton. In the course of his sermon he said, 'I should like to die like an old soldier *sword in hand*.' Two nights after he was found lying dead on the floor of his bedroom. The death of this venerable man was the occasion of Montgomery's well-known poem, 'The Christian Soldier,' beginning—

Servant of God, well done!
 Rest from thy loved employ;
 The battle fought, the victory won,
 Enter thy Master's joy.

III

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘LONDON, *November 29, 1816.*

‘ I SIT down to answer yours of the 13th inst., a letter which afforded us all very great pleasure.

‘ The victory over *snuff*, of which I informed you in my last, is (through mercy) complete. It is no more trouble to me now to refrain from it than if I had never contracted the habit. At one time it would have appeared less difficult to me to live upon bread and water than to be without that enlivening ingredient ; but when I thoroughly *willed* to give it up, every difficulty disappeared, and I felt pleasure in contracting a habit the very reverse of what had long enslaved me.

‘ Miss Bradburn has sent you a copy of her father’s *Memoirs* in Mr. Bogie’s book-parcel, which was sent off last Monday, and will probably be in Rochdale by the time you

receive this letter. I did not submit a single sentence of my "Character" of Mr. Bradburn to any of the preachers. It had gone to press before your last came to hand, and it gives me great pleasure to observe that without having your thoughts on the subject, I withheld my name, and gave the "shades as well as the lights." Mr. Marsden told me (as he said, "without flattery") that it was better written than Dr. Clarke would have written it. Mr. Gaulter, whom I saw yesterday, speaks highly of the "Character," with the exception of my attributing *judgement* to the subject of it, which, he says, he never possessed. This censure sat very light upon me. I told Mr. G. that I distinguished between *judgement* and *understanding*; and observed that Mr. Bradburn had a *gigantic* understanding. Mr. G. seems to confound judgement with prudence, which are things very distinct. There is an amazing demand for the work, and it is probable that the whole 3,000 copies will be disposed of in the course of three months. Give me your unbiassed judgement upon the "Character," keeping in mind that it professes to be no more than a sketch of some traits.

'I doubt not that you are making great

progress in Greek and Latin, and in everything else to which you turn your attention. Attending steadily to the Divine Presence, and walking closely with God by faith, prayer, and watchfulness, will not only contribute essentially to your happiness, but facilitate your learning. Sober happiness (and true happiness is a sober thing) is highly favourable to science. I feel happy often in praying for you.

‘ If Providence should open your way to the University, I should be pleased; and that event, if best for you—taking eternity into the account—will take place.

‘ We have formed a Juvenile Missionary Society here, of which Mary Ann and Jane are members. Wonders, you know, are done by a penny a week. We have excellent news from Ceylon.

‘ Robberies and housebreakings are carried on in town to an alarming extent. The custom of breaking through walls is becoming prevalent. The Lord Mayor is very active and persevering in improving the state of the Police. I wrote to George a few days ago. Farewell, my dear Fellow. Be manly, and rest assured of the unalterable and warm affection of your Father.’

IV

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘LONDON, *December* 14, 1816.

‘ABOUT five minutes ago I received your short letter, and do not wonder that it is short, as it appears that you have not received a very long letter that I sent off for you yesterday fortnight. What has become of it? I am quite sure it was properly directed, and I take it for granted that it was given at the *Book-Room* to the postman. . . . You might well, my sweet James, be surprised that I should be so long without writing to you. I neither was nor am capable of such neglect. I was beginning to think you rather negligent in answering me, especially as I wished your opinion of the *character* in question. Write immediately after you have read it.

‘I dare say, if you frequently see any public print, that you know as much of the late

riot, which was crushed in embryo, as I do. Several of the rioters are in prison, and probably a few of them will suffer. All is quiet at present, and has been so since the mob was dispersed.

‘ I had a charming letter from George a few days ago. He begs to be remembered to you, and says you have not written to him. I shall send you the books you mention. Mary Ann and Jane send their love to you. They are very good girls.

‘ P.S.—In my next I shall send you an order on Mr. Bogie for two pounds. Had that sum been enclosed in my last, it seems it would have been lost. Let me see what a sheet full you will send me next time. God bless you, my dear James.’

NOTES

The year 1816 was one of much distress in England. At the close of the great war—the battle of Waterloo was fought on June 18, 1815—there was financial exhaustion, commercial depression, disorganization of labour, and much social and political discontent. There was, in addition, a bad harvest in 1816.

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Riots broke out, and in many places machinery was destroyed. The disturbance referred to in the letter was known as the 'Spafields riot,' which was repressed without much difficulty.

The books which Mr. Macdonald was to send to his son, and the order for two pounds, were undoubtedly prepared for by the economies to which pleasant allusion is made. The 'couple of fresh herrings' for dinner, and the 'laying aside' of snuff belong to the self-denial of the brave little household in the interest of the scholar son and brother.

V

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘ LONDON, *February* 21, 1817.

‘ YOUR letter of the 12th inst., though designated by you rather an excuse for one than deserving the name, afforded us much pleasure. I had every morning for several days been expecting its arrival.

‘ Mary Ann and Jane are excellent girls, who take pains to improve, and who conduct themselves with wisdom and discretion. They are both very well, and M. A. is growing quite lusty. I am glad that you have heard from George, and that he is making such progress in his learning. With seriousness and close attention, considering his native powers, he may, with the advantages he possesses, do wonders. You know that he is naturally bold, enterprising, and volatile, and that these qualities, regulated by religion, prudence,

and discretion, will enable him to conquer difficulties under which those differently constituted would sink.

‘I think his natural fortitude superior to what I ever possessed; but perhaps the difference chiefly arises from the great weakness under which I laboured in early life. He made no parade of religion in his letter to me, but in the true style of Methodism simply said that he hoped there would soon be a revival at the Grove. I intend to write to him by to-morrow’s post, and satisfy him on the subject of his not coming home at the time of the approaching vacation. I may possibly go to the Sheffield Conference; and if I do, I intend to pay him a visit.

‘I do not continue to subscribe to the Library; indeed, I did not find it worth my while to do so, especially as it was removed to such a distance as rendered it inconvenient, if not impracticable, for me to see the Daily Paper and Periodical Works taken in there. But I intend that your sisters shall have the opportunity of reading *The Lives of Illustrious Women*, and intend, when I find a little leisure, to see whether extracts from it may with advantage be inserted in our own *Youths*’

Guardian. By the way, that work goes off very well ; we had a second edition of it to print.

‘ I am quite surprised at your having read all Horace’s *Odes* in so short a time, and am happy that you have not been inattentive to Greek. You know that though, with care and time, I can read any classical author in Latin, I am very defective in a knowledge of syntax. You will find Juvenal sufficiently difficult. I have sent you, by Mr. Bogie’s book-parcel, a copy of his *Satires, in usu Delphini*. I bought it at Lackington’s for five and sixpence. Baynes had not a single copy of it, and the best second-hand one at Lackington’s was that which I have sent you.

‘ Our Book Concerns, as far as I can learn, are doing pretty well, though they have suffered in some degree in consequence of the general distress of the country.

‘ Mr. Benson is about the 6th chapter of First Corinthians with his Commentary, and I doubt not it will be a full year after next Conference before he will be able to bring it to a conclusion. There is no probability of my leaving London next summer, nor is it at all likely, were Mr. Benson’s Commentary ended to-morrow, that he could do without me. I

never was more happy with him and the rest of my brethren than I am at present. Mr. Bradburn's *Life* sells remarkably well ; sixteen hundred copies had been disposed of some time ago. Another volume will appear shortly. Miss Eliza has gone to Bolton. Mrs. Bradburn has returned, and she and her daughters are well.

' Yes, James, " the sun that shines on the broad capital " shines on you, and happiness is not confined to any place ; for the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings, shines into the hearts of all, whether at " Indus or the Pole," who do not by the screen of sin obstruct His rays. That Sun is, I trust, bringing to perfection in you the graces of the Spirit. I bless God that I am not unvisited by His benign influences. Mine is a busy life, but a happy one.

' Farewell, my dear Fellow. Be happy, and write very soon to your affectionate Father.

' Mary Ann and Jane send you their best *best* love.'

NOTES

The mention made in this letter of his son George—my father, then at Woodhouse Grove

School and eleven years of age, will be read with interest by those who remember his admirable qualities and distinguished career. Mr. Macdonald shows a true insight, and his forecast was amply verified. Let us hope that the boy at school was satisfied with the reasons given him for his not coming home for the holidays ! They were, doubtless, financial.

Mr. Benson's Commentary was finished somewhat earlier than Mr. Macdonald expected. On March 14, 1818, Mr. Benson writes : ' I thank God I have now completed my Commentary on the Bible, undertaken at the desire of the Conference held at Manchester in 1809, and begun in November of that year ; so that I have had it in hand a little more than eight years ; during which time, I have generally been employed upon it, and the Magazines and other publications, from five in the morning, winter as well as summer, to eleven at night, allowing time only for meals. Added to this, most Sundays I have read prayers in one or other of our chapels once, and preached twice in London, or its vicinity, and frequently have walked the same day eight, ten, or even twelve miles, and sometimes fourteen or fifteen ; so that certainly, if the Lord had not, in a

peculiar degree, strengthened me, it would have been impossible for my feeble frame to have so long sustained such confinement and such labours. I believe I can say, too, that God has, in a singular manner, directed me, and given me light on His Word ; so that, I trust, I have been able, in a satisfactory manner, to explain most difficult passages, and to give, in general, the true sense of the divine oracles. My labour has been hard, and I have been frequently straitened for time, but my work has not been unpleasant, but rather delightful : and while I have been endeavouring to edify others, I have been edified myself.—To God be all the glory ! ’

VI

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

' LONDON, *April* 16, 1817.

' I FEEL much obliged by your long, excellent letter of the 5th instant. It affords me great pleasure to find that the idea of my leaving London, where I am consuming my health and time in "thankless labour," gives you no uneasiness. God, as your dear mother said, will, I doubt not, take care of me and mine. I have always been a child of Providence. You say that "the London preachers, you suppose, make large professions of the help they will afford Mr. Benson." In answer, I would observe that they rather promise him help from other quarters. He told them he could have no dependence upon the assistance which they promised, and that he had frequently to return the reviews sent to him from the country. I am not sure that my removal is

finally settled, as the subject must come before the Conference, and as none can tell what four months may bring forth. But I can tell you that my heart is at ease, and that I feel in a great measure lightened of a burden of care which often weighed down my spirits. I begin to breathe with a freedom of which the care of the *Magazine* had long deprived me. In order to provide suitably for that work, I relinquished the study of Greek for years, and read very little Latin ; but since the decision in question, I have begun to read Cicero's *De Naturâ Deorum*, and find little more difficulty in reading it than French. In the department I have filled so long, I have been so much in the habit of using my understanding that I find little difficulty in understanding the classic authors. I have spent many hours of late, and most agreeably, in turning over their pages.

‘ But you want the history of the late affair. Now you know that I am no matter-of-fact man, and therefore you will be prepared for a very partial account. Last year, you are aware, a proposal was made for my removal, which, though it failed, was kept in mind by those who brought it forward. It appears that

all the preachers except Mr. Watson had agreed that as Mr. Benson will be nearly done with his Commentary by the time of Conference, an "Assistant Editor" will not be necessary after that period. They all, but more especially Messrs. Bunting and Watson, spoke of me in terms the most flattering, said that no man should succeed me, and that I, if any one, should fill the office. James Wood, who, you know, is a good, grave man, hinted that the Conference would give me a mark of their love ; by which, I suppose, he meant, give me some money—to which I should have no objection. Mr. Jenkins supposed that they would have to call me back again, to which I good-humouredly replied (for my mind was at perfect ease) that they might, as the Romans were obliged to recall Cicero from banishment. The people in general, so far as I can learn, are indignant at the thought of my removal.

' Thus the matter stands at present, and I give myself no uneasiness on the subject. I am called to live, more than usually, by faith ; but sure I am none ever trusted in God and were confounded. I am glad on several accounts that I came to London, and I may probably be equally so at my removal from it,

‘ Here I must change the theme for another, which you will be sorry to have an account of. Your sister Jane has been ill for about a month of an inflammation of the lungs. I mentioned nothing in my last concerning her affliction, hoping it would wear off. I can withhold the intelligence from you no longer. Mr. H. attends her every day, and Dr. Hamilton has been to see her once. We hope the means taken will be effectual towards stopping the progress of the disease. But it is well to consider that we hold our every earthly blessing by a mere thread. Let not this account depress you. All is in the hands of God.’

NOTE

It will be seen that the return from editorial to pastoral work, which Mr. Macdonald contemplated with so much calmness, was brought about at the ensuing Conference, when he was appointed to the Oldham Circuit. Six years spent in London, mainly occupied in literary work, in no sense unfitted or indisposed him for the more laborious life of the itinerant ministry.

VII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘LONDON, *May* 21, 1817.

‘SOME time since (for I have not leisure to reckon how days pass) I wrote to you by Mr. Reece, giving you some account of our affairs at home. I have now the great pleasure of informing you that Jane is almost as well as ever, and that she is quite cheerful and sprightly. I trust that her late affliction has been accompanied and followed by salutary effects upon her mind. She and Mary Ann are delightful girls, who study to make my life comfortable ; and to this end they largely contribute. Indeed, I have ten thousand causes above most men living to be grateful to the Parent of Good, who has directed my steps and provided for me from my earliest youth to the present day. I know not that my health was ever better than at present ;

my circumstances, though not affluent, are competent, and I enjoy that peace which passeth understanding. I am able to labour from the pulpit and the press, and I live in perfect peace and harmony with my brethren in the ministry, and with the members of the Society. May the infinity of blessings with which I am favoured be all sanctified to my profit. I pray for you and the rest of my dear children every day by name in secret, and I doubt not that you will all sincerely and heartily devote yourselves to God.

‘A few days ago I received a letter from George. He is very happy at Wakefield, nor did he express the least regret at his not coming to London. After the vacation, he says, he is to begin Greek and French. Should he not confine himself to Latin for some months longer? I know that he possesses uncommon mental powers which, if seriously directed, will enable him to excel in learning; and I doubt not that the religious bent of mind which he now possesses will greatly tend to facilitate his studies. He spoke at “The Grove” at the formation both of the Bible and the Missionary Societies. I should have liked to hear his speech. I doubt not that

his being chosen on these occasions is a proof that he maintains an excellent character. I have ordered him some money at Wakefield. I drew for it upon Mr. Newton, but he informs me he will receive it from Miss Watson.

‘ Your old friend Mr. Yolland is near the confines of the eternal world. He was a busy, useful, good man, who acquired property, and will leave it all to others. “ Life,” says Gambold, “ is sacred all and vain.” It is short, but long enough as a time of probation for eternity.

‘ I have lately read almost through Dr. Buchanan’s *Life*, written by the Rev. Hugh Pearson. I thought highly of him before, but now he stands far higher in my estimation. So much good sense, prudence, piety, and zeal as he possessed fall to the lot of extremely few. His biographer was worthy of so delightful a subject.

‘ I am now reading in my leisure hours Boileau’s *Satires*, in French. They are well worth your perusal. Pope says, “ And Boileau still in sight of Horace reigns,” which is no small compliment from so good a judge. I am now reviewing Styles’ *Memoirs of Mr. Burke*. Dr. Styles nibbles at the Church of

England. Does he not deserve a blow for that? Meantime, while I take every opportunity that offers itself for vindicating our national Establishment, I would not be a High Churchman. Upon High Church principles the Establishment cannot well be maintained; but upon such as Tillotson and Burnet adopted it may, and that successfully. I wish you to take the tenable ground on which they stood; but, at the same time, to meddle as little as may be with controversy. Controversy, in my little way, has been for years a part of my business. I was providentially called to it, and it has neither soured my temper nor alienated my affections from those whose opinions I have occasionally attacked.

‘It is well always to distinguish betwixt matters of *opinion* and matters of *faith*; and where we find a good man, to give him no uneasiness on the subject of opinions. I doubt not that we are all (I do not except myself) more or less speculatively erroneous. But you know my sentiments on this subject.

‘You have, no doubt, rejoiced to find that the Catholic Question was not suffered as before to go into Committee. Messrs. Foster

and Peel deserve great credit for their powerful and successful opposition to the unconstitutional claims of the Papists. Abbot, the Speaker, as the question did not go into Committee, had no opportunity of speaking on the late occasion. He is, you know, a host in himself.

‘On the subject of proceeding diligently in your studies, but not to the injury of your health, I need say nothing. Nor do I think it necessary to say much on religion. You have enjoyed many advantages of a religious nature, and opportunities for acquiring knowledge, all of which, I am persuaded, have been fully improved by you. It is well to work “while it is day.” It gives me pleasure to look back, and see that mine has been a life of activity.

‘Tell us when we may expect to see you; and when you have taken your place for London, write to inform us at what time the coach will arrive, and at what place, that Mary Ann and I may meet you.

‘You will be surprised to hear that I read the prayers in City Road Chapel last Sunday week, after which I preached. Mr. Vasey had been ill, but he has since recovered. I had

never publicly read the Litany before. It is an admirable devotional form. I have lately preached often, I trust to my own profit and that of others. I do not intend to go to Conference, but to make the time of it a season of profitable relaxation.

‘Is it worth while to inform you that Mr. Marsden made me a present of a knife with which I mend my pens? This, and other matters in this letter, are little things, but—

Let school-taught reason cavil all it can,
These little things are great to little man.’

VIII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘LONDON, *June* 14, 1817.

‘ON looking at the date of your last (May 31), it appears that the time since has passed with immense rapidity ; a sure proof that I have been diligently employed.

‘Young says—

Without employ the mind is on the Rack,
The rack of Rest, to souls most adverse.

‘Preparing two magazines for the present packing, instead of one, has recently increased my labours. I am, like a hireling, fulfilling my day. Mine has been, in its way, a life of labour, and I trust not altogether a useless one. Franklin, who was a very busy man, said, when he was turned eighty, that were it not for two actions of his, he would have no objection to live his life over again. That,

however, is not the language of an old man who has a prospect of a better world. It answers no end to be making impossible suppositions ; our lives *cannot* be lived over again. But though, in the prospect of future happiness, we may, in some peculiarly happy moments, desire to depart, *yet life is still sweet*. So I find it, and the happiness I have in you and the rest of my dear children forms a material part of its sweetness. I see by your last that you have your *low* moments, nor do I wonder that at the most important era of your life it should be the case. God has led both you and me by ways we had not known, and sometimes by ways opposed to our inclinations. But we know that happiness is the child of self-denial, and that by giving up our will to Him, and acknowledging Him in all our ways, we shall be in the sure way of having our path pointed out. Sorrow, in every walk of life, is more or less the portion of our race. But how well to be able to say, " I'll bear life's tax without one rebel murmur, nor think it misery to be a man." Our life, however, when we are sincerely devoted to God, as I doubt not you are, is as happy as the present state of things will admit.

‘ I am now reviewing Buchanan’s *Life*. He was going into twenty-five when he went to Cambridge. When you read the exercises through which he passed while his going thither was doubtful, you will not need to

Bid your bosom sympathize with his.

‘ I wish you to spend a day or two in Manchester before you take coach. Let me know when and where Mary Ann and I may meet you on your coming to town. We all long for the time. How long can you stay with us? Write as soon as you can inform us of the *hour* we may expect you. We are enjoying your company in anticipation. Hoping we shall meet you in health and *good spirits* (for sorrow of heart is as rottenness in the bones), I am, your ever affectionate Father.’

NOTE

Young was the favourite poet of the Methodists of my grandfather’s time, and his *Night Thoughts* were more frequently quoted in the pulpit, and in the conversation of pious people, than any other poetical composition, until he was succeeded, if not deposed, by Cowper. I think I am right in saying that he is not read

at all to-day. The present age has no taste for the 'gloomy epigram' in which he excelled, or for the moral platitudes which he knew how to draw out in well-constructed and sonorous blank verse. He was pre-eminently a rhetorician, and aimed, not always unsuccessfully, at the effects which eloquence, rather than poetry, produces. His worst work is unspeakably poor. In his best he attains an impressive solemnity that naturally suggests the pulpit as its place of utterance. So far as Young may be said still to live, he lives in couplets or in single lines that have become quotations. The *Night Thoughts* were published in 1742-44. The author died in 1765. In 1770 Wesley published 'An Extract from Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*, on Life, Death, and Immortality.' In his preface he says, 'I took some pains in reading over Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts*, leaving out the indifferent lines, correcting many of the rest, and explaining the hard words, in order to make that noble work more useful to all, and more intelligible to the ordinary reader.' To leave out an author's 'indifferent lines,' and to correct many of the rest, is surely to give large interpretation to the functions of an editor !

IX

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘OLDHAM, *October 1, 1817.*

‘THIS morning I received your very excellent letter, and I feel the full force of the reasoning it contains. I shall endeavour to profit by what you say relative to both George and the girls. The only circumstance of an unpleasant nature consequent on receiving your letter was that you had paid the postage ; but I shall not retaliate by prepaying this. I have charity and grasp sufficient to account for that circumstance, without lessening you either in my esteem or affection. *Abjicio suspicionem.*

‘I am preparing to set off for Delph, and therefore can do little more at present than acknowledge the receipt of your letter. Last Sunday I preached here in the morning, and in the course of the day walked about twelve

miles, and preached two Charity Sermons for our Sunday schools. The collection at each of those sermons was unusually large ; that at Shaw was more than a third larger than it had been the preceding year. We had a good Quarterly Meeting last Monday. Children of the preachers receive nothing from the circuit ! I received £4 4s. 0d. for Mrs. Macdonald and £3 13s. 6d. for servant and washing ; which, with one pound weekly, will enable us to subsist comfortably. We live together in much peace and love, and I trust we are all sincerely devoted to God. The care and attention necessary for managing the affairs of the circuit occupy my mind considerably. But Young says, " Life's cares are comforts ; such by Heaven ordained " !! One thing I feel, and for which I trust I am truly thankful, that since my coming here, I have gained a great accession of mental and bodily strength. Having to preach so frequently, enables me to perform that important duty with more facility than I ordinarily did in London. Give our love to Mr. Bridge, and tell him, that if nothing extraordinary prevent, we shall all be at Heywood Hall next Tuesday between twelve and one. I wish you could meet us

toward Middleton, to take us the near way. We intend to take the main road. About eleven, I think we shall be at the Toll Bar on your side Middleton. We all remember you with the most cordial affection.'

NOTES

Mr. Macdonald generously reproaches his son for prepaying his letter. It was at that time customary for the receiver of the letter to pay the postage, the amount of which, for a single sheet—there were no envelopes and no postage stamps—varied between fourpence and one and eightpence, according to the distance. It was a fine contest of courtesy between father and son, both of them as poor as might be, and it would need a court of honour to decide which of them showed the more delicate perception, the son who prepaid his letter, or the father who did not.

I cannot, at this interval of nearly ninety years, read without some feeling of pride, as well as emotion of a tenderer sort, this cheerful enumeration of the items that made up my grandfather's modest stipend. A pound a week was the main column of the financial

edifice. Sixteen guineas a year were added for the support of the wife whom he had recently brought into his home, and fourteen guineas for the board and wages of a servant, —eighty-three pounds ten per annum, all told ; ‘ which will enable us to subsist comfortably ’ !

X

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

' OLDHAM, *February* 18, 1818.

' SINCE I saw you, I have received the first volume of Faber's Sermons. The article will make about seventeen pages. He is a man of uncommon powers, and one of the most candid of polemics. His four sermons on Regeneration will long continue a monument of the soundness of his orthodoxy and the candour of his statements. He tears to atoms, but not in a savage way, the notion that Baptism and Regeneration are inseparable. The general expressions used in the Baptismal Service, he maintains, can no more be applied to every particular service than those in the Burial Service can be applied to every person who is duly buried according to the ritual in the Common Prayer. He maintains that it is no more absurd to believe that his clerical

brethren *save* all whom they bury, than regenerate all whom they baptize. He speaks out, and backs his opinion by the suffrages of the most eminent Prelates and Divines that have ever adorned the Church of England. If the dignitaries of the Church of England be in general worldly-minded men, Faber takes no method of rising under their patronage! He loves truth, and is apparently a man of eminent piety. When you come over to see us, which I hope you will do shortly, you will have an opportunity of reading the work. It is a large octavo volume. I am invited by Mr. Simpson of the Bury Circuit to preach a sermon for the Sunday school at Radcliffe on Sunday evening, April the twenty-sixth. Mr. Simpson or his colleague is to supply my place that day at Middleton.'

NOTE

A few days before writing this letter to his son, Mr. Macdonald had written at considerable length to Mr. Benson on the subject of Faber's Sermons. They had greatly impressed him. He says, 'I have carefully read every sentence of the volume. So much good sense, sound

divinity, original matter, and clear reasoning I have seldom, if ever, found in so small a compass.' Though Mr. Macdonald was not now associated with Mr. Benson in the editorship of the *Magazine*, his literary habits were not laid aside, and he goes on to say, 'In about a fortnight I hope to send you a review of the volume sufficiently long for one number.' The result was a review continued through four numbers of the *Magazine*, 56 octavo pages in length!

XI

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘OLDHAM, *June 15, 1818.*

‘FROM a letter received this morning from Mr. Walton I quote as follows : “ I called upon Mr. Rogers, whose terms are sixty guineas per annum for young men under sixteen, and eighty guineas for those above, which includes Board and Education, with every expense except four-and-sixpence per annum for a seat in the church, and washing and shoe-cleaning, which is a trifle. Each boy has a bed to himself. Two vacations, a month each. The number now under instruction is sixteen, eleven of them shortly to be ordained. At present some few board and lodge out of the house, but Mr. Rogers now declines this, and will take none but boarders into his own house, and would not like to take any but those who are seriously disposed.”

‘ You will observe I have quoted Mr. W. verbatim, and that he is very circumstantial in his information. I hope in one year, with the advantages to be derived from such a situation, you will be fit for ordination. Would you not do well to obtain a recommendation to Mr. Rogers from the Rev. Messrs. Thistlewaite and Atkinson? Mr. Rogers appears to be the man for your purpose. You have no time to lose in deciding upon the matter. When your mind is fully made up I shall expect to see you at Oldham.

‘ I was about eight hours engaged yesterday at Delph, preaching, meeting classes, and baptizing children, after which I walked home. Surely I do not eat the bread of idleness! To-morrow, forty-one years ago, God blessed me with a sense of His love. What a busy life has mine been from that time to the present! But I have nothing to rest my hope upon except the mercy of God through the merits of Christ. *There* is firm footing, and *there* is true comfort. Living very near to God is not only productive of much happiness, but highly favourable to the acquisition of knowledge.

‘Hoping everything possible from you in point of piety and learning—

‘Your most affectionate Father.’

NOTE

James Macdonald, the younger, had now arrived at a turning-point in his history. I take the following from a paper written after his death, by his sister Mary Ann :—

‘James was born in Chester, May 25, 1796. At an early age he gave proofs of possessing a mind of no ordinary powers. His disposition was reserved, and from a child he was serious and thoughtful. He was chiefly educated under his father’s direction, with the exception of one year which he spent at Mr. Bridge’s Boarding-school in Rochdale. When very young James became almost the constant companion of his father, reading and studying with him, and such was the progress that he made in his various studies, and in knowledge generally, that his father would, before he was fifteen years old, consult him with advantage upon most subjects on which he was writing. In 1809 we removed to the York Circuit. While there James frequently attended the

service in the Minster on week-days, and the sublimity of the Church prayers and the whole form of the worship greatly delighted him. About this time he began to entertain serious thoughts of devoting himself to the ministry of the gospel, and, if Providence should open his way, to enter the Establishment. From this period all his studies were calculated to prepare him for that most important work. In 1811 we removed to London. Soon after our arrival James obtained a situation at the Methodist Book-Room, but he still continued to lodge and board at home. For the first three years of our residence in London James devoted the evenings, and not infrequently a good part of the night, to study ; but during the fourth year he devoted his time at home to reading and attending upon his dearly loved mother, who was then drawing to the close of all her sufferings. She died August 19, 1815.

‘ The next year James closely applied himself to study, and in July 1816, he entered the school of his old friend Mr. Bridge as teacher. Mr. Bridge treated him more like a son than an assistant, giving him every opportunity for study.

‘Finding that my brother had a capacity for great acquirements, and also great perseverance, Mr. Bridge offered to lend him sufficient money to prosecute his studies at Cambridge. This generous proposal James did not accept without consulting his father, and making it a subject of much thought and prayer. Had there not been the strongest probability of his being able soon to repay his kind friend, he would not have accepted the generous offer, though it was urged upon him with the affectionate interest of a parent. In October 1818, James entered Queens’ College, Cambridge.’

Before the offer of Mr. Bridge was made, or, at all events, before it was accepted, there appears to have been some thought of James pursuing his studies under a Mr. Rogers, who was preparing several other young men for ordination. Nothing, however, came of this, and in due course James proceeded to Cambridge.

XII

TO MASTER GEORGE MACDONALD,
Woodhouse Grove, near Bradford

‘LEEDS, *August 9, 1818.*

‘ I AM sorry that on account of the Conference continuing so long, I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you at Woodhouse Grove. That disappointment you and I must endeavour to bear with patience. You will remember, my dear George, some of the many conversations I have had with you on the subject of religion, and, I trust, profit by them. I am glad that you spend some of your vacant hours in reading Caesar’s Commentaries. You may make much greater improvement during the course of this year than you have done (and you have done very well) since you went to the Grove. The more you devote yourself to God, the happier you will be, and the better you will learn. Pray much, watch continually,

and never be idle. Never say or do anything for which your conscience will reproach you, or which, on its being known, would expose you to shame. The aptitude which you possess for introducing subjects, and the facility with which you can generally converse, if rightly managed, will tend to make you pleasing and useful. I have long found it much for my comfort to endeavour to keep good Philip Henry's resolution, i.e. "Resolved that I will not speak evil." Speaking evil of absent persons is a great sin in the professing world, and yet a sin against the whole spirit of the gospel. Shun it, my dear George, as you would avoid swearing and lying.

'I should think such a book as that you mention in your letter would be of use to you. Accustom yourself to write down with care what you hear on important subjects; and learn to write as good a hand as you possibly can.'

'August 10, 1818.

'Conference is hastening to a close. It has been a long, but very comfortable one. What your future profession shall be Providence will point out; it is not in man to

direct his steps. Give yourself wholly to God, and you shall be happy in time and in eternity. Farewell.'

NOTES

This is the earliest letter from my grandfather to my father that has been preserved. It is not written with the ease and freedom that characterized his letters to his eldest son, as is but natural. The elder brother was already a man, exceptionally mature both in character and acquirements, and had long been his father's companion and friend. The younger was a boy not yet thirteen years old, and for three years or more had lived very little at home. His father's intense desire for his spiritual wellbeing is very apparent; and his discernment of his younger son's qualities, such as his conversational powers, was accurate from the first.

The mention of Caesar's Commentaries gives me occasion to say that the copy referred to is in my possession. It is Scaliger's Edition, published in Paris, 1638, a duodecimo, parchment-backed, and in good preservation. The name, Geo. Macdonald, is written in a boyish

hand inside the cover. The fifth book of the *De Bello Gallico* has pencil marks and marginal notes. Thirty-five years later my father helped me to translate Caesar. Since then I have done as much for my boys ; thus history repeats itself.

XIII

TO MASTER GEORGE MACDONALD

'OLDHAM, *October 25, 1818.*

'YOUR sisters have received your letter, and they, with your mother and myself, rejoice that the Lord is working so gloriously among the scholars at the Grove. But we particularly rejoice that you, who are so very dear to us all, are enabled to love God. It is very usual for persons, whether old or young, after having obtained a sense of their Maker's favour, to be strongly tempted to doubt the truth of their experience. Upon that subject I was greatly tempted a short time after I had been set at liberty. You must keep in mind that not for the sake of your praying much, or feeling much distress of mind, but for the alone sake of Christ you are pardoned. Firmly believe that Christ loved you, and gave Himself for you, and strive to please Him in everything, and you will grow in grace

continually. Be it your constant study to please God, and you will experience as much joy as shall be for your advantage. Do not measure the degree of your grace *merely* by the fervour of your devotion either in public or in private, but rather by the love to God you feel, and by those other fruits of the Spirit, meekness, gentleness, and goodness. Be very humble and watchful ; but if, on any occasion, you shall have by anything grieved the Spirit, do not, on that account, cast away your confidence, but earnestly beg of God to pardon you, and give you grace to be more on your guard for the future. So much humble love as any possess, so much have they of true religion. That love makes us think meanly of ourselves and highly of others. It teaches and enables us to govern our temper and tongue, and to live in charity with every one. May the Lord fill your heart with that love.

‘ Be sure to apply yourself diligently to your learning. This is your indispensable duty. Never be a moment unemployed, or triflingly employed. Be serious, but not demure. Oh, George, be steadfast, immovable, as I trust you will, that you may be happy in time and in eternity. God bless you.’

XIV

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

'OLDHAM, *December* 14, 1818.

'YOURS of the 11th ult., as well as that which preceded it, afforded me much pleasure. I expected it on the day that it arrived; and that being Saturday, its contents enabled me to go through the labours of the following day more comfortably than I should otherwise have done. I often remember you in prayer, both in private and in the family. Peace, harmony and love reign amongst us, and we enjoy in perfection health, that crown of temporal blessings. The girls are making considerable progress in French. . . . I was lately much pleased to find that Mr. Wesley in his *Journal* speaks in the strongest terms of Mr. Simeon's piety. He goes so far in his praise as to compare him with Mr. Fletcher,

When eminent piety, sense, and learning meet in the same man they constitute him a finished character. Mr. Simeon must be an old man, and continuing to possess his mental powers unimpaired he is the better qualified for instructing candidates for the ministry. Time and experience teach a variety of important lessons, a knowledge of which cannot ordinarily be acquired by the best theories. Some, we know, are wise and prudent beyond their years ; but it is generally found that a multitude of years is necessary to teach certain parts of wisdom.

‘ Of late, the congregations in the circuit have greatly increased, but especially at Oldham. The last Sunday I preached there the chapel was crowded throughout, so that it was thought the congregation amounted to almost 1,200 souls. At Middleton, several backsliders are restored, and at Delph the best of works goes on blessedly. You would have been delighted to see the multitudes that attended there last Sunday evening, when I preached a sermon on account of the late Queen’s death. You will perhaps wonder what I had to say respecting her, but I am happy to inform you that I felt no difficulty

upon the subject. It is true I neither said, nor could say, much of her Majesty's personal or royal character. I observed that she was born and bred a Protestant Princess ; that she lived and died in Church Communion ; and that, considering her elevated situation in life, she must have possessed much self-command and lived regularly, otherwise she could not, without a miracle, have retained her health and faculties for so great a number of years. In short, I expressed a comfortable hope of her final salvation. I then proceeded to point out the advantages which this country derives from its Protestant Government, and observed that the Queens as well as the Kings of England must be Protestants. This naturally led me to maintain that, under God, we owe our civil and religious liberty to the Established Church ; that it was by that Church, and not by the Sectaries, that popery was put down in England ; and that, had the Government continued popish, it would soon have disposed of such men as Wesley and Whitefield.

‘ But here this objection occurred :—Did not our Protestant Government persecute for a number of years the Nonconformists ? This

I admitted, nor did I say anything in its vindication. But I maintained that the seed of religious liberty which is inherent in Protestantism, after being buried for a time, produced the tree of civil and religious liberty under which we repose in safety.

‘ You justly observe that I should not have patience to address a certain description of hearers you mention. Can no remedy be applied to prevent so great a scandal? Indecorum in a place of worship is intolerable. . . . The time has happily arrived in which a minister must be serious in religion and orthodox in doctrine, or be, what he well deserves, a *contemptible* character. Men of learning, though destitute of true piety, when they embrace the doctrine of General Redemption, successfully combat Calvin’s peculiarities ; but in doing this they generally attack some of the pure doctrines of Christianity with which Calvinism is blended. Bishop Horsley’s sentiments upon the controversy are admirable. He was a man of orthodoxy, and a man of *grasp*. He understood well how to distinguish between matters of opinion and matters of faith. The latter are few in number, and ought to be well understood. Pearson has

described them well in his great work upon the Creed. . . . Holiness of life, which is always accompanied by true humility, is favourable to the reception of orthodox sentiments. *Reasoning*, where it is both reasonable and necessary to *believe*, is a fruitful source of heterodox opinions. There is much meaning in the words, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." To divine influence I am indebted for power to believe revealed truth, nay, to believe in the being and attributes of God.

'I am glad that you intend to apply yourself with diligence to mathematics; your doing this need not prevent your being a good classic. I need not tell you that every moment of your time is precious, nor that *assiduitas durissima vincit*. The difficulties I had to surmount after I was turned thirty-three years of age in acquiring some knowledge of Latin, and Greek, and French I conquered with pleasure.

'I supped with Mr. Radley a few nights since. He wished that you had translated the whole of that oration of Quintilian which you began. He finds it difficult to read the *Somnium Scipionis*.

‘ I shall depend upon your writing on Wednesday or Thursday next, that I may have your letter before Sunday week. Write as carelessly and as off-handedly as I do, and you will never miss the time your doing so will require. If you can see the November *Magazine* you will find in it a review of mine on “The Church her own enemy.” I think you will be pleased with several sentiments it contains. I had, some time ago, a delightful letter from George, who has more religion now than barely to “acknowledge moral obligations.”

‘ P.S.—Has Dr. Marsh begun his lectures? How do you relish mathematics? Are the orations of Demosthenes harder than St. Paul’s Epistles? Accustom yourself to converse on a variety of subjects, but always with care and attention. By putting our thoughts into words we improve them greatly. To conversation I am considerably indebted. I am so much in the habit of conversing on all sorts of subjects that I generally find no more difficulty in preaching than I do in taking my part in conversation in a large company, sometimes even less. Lay your account to

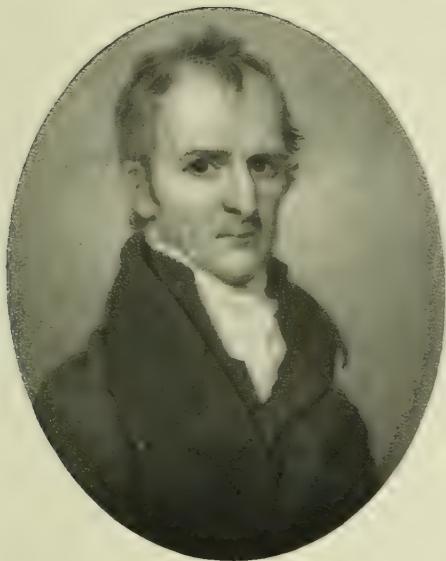
preach extempore, or at least with the assistance of short notes. I am glad you have such a model before you as Mr. Simeon. Hear him as often as possible. You may hear others with advantage. Be neither Calvinistic nor Arminian, an orthodox Churchman. Be fully persuaded in your own mind, but do not meddle with the controversy. I dare say that many at Cambridge would consider me a Calvinist. I think I keep a tolerable medium betwixt Calvinism and Arminianism. The able and judicious Calvinists are our masters on the doctrine of justification by faith. They maintain, and justly too, that the righteousness by which we are justified must be a perfect righteousness, and consequently, that of Christ imputed to us ; that there are many degrees of sanctification, but that our justification, being perfect, does not admit of degrees ; and that consequently, we may, in the course of our pilgrimage, be more or less holy, and yet all the while be equally justified. All this is true, but unless properly guarded it leads to Antinomianism. The utmost limit of truth borders on error ; but let us hold the truth and look to the unction of the Holy One to preserve us from error.'

NOTES

Wesley's reference to Simeon occurs in his *Journal*, December 20, 1784.

'I went to Hinxworth, where I had the satisfaction of meeting Mr. Simeon, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He has spent some time with Mr. Fletcher at Madeley ; two kindred souls, much resembling each other, both in fervour of spirit, and in the earnestness of their address. He gave me the pleasing information that there are three parish churches in Cambridge wherein true scriptural religion is preached, and several young gentlemen who are happy partakers of it.'

When Wesley and Simeon met, the latter was a young man, twenty-five years of age, and had before him a career at Cambridge akin to that which Wesley might have had at Oxford, had he continued to reside there instead of becoming an itinerant preacher. At the time that James Macdonald entered the University, Simeon, then in his sixtieth year, was at the height of his influence as an Evangelical leader. He died in 1836, at the age of seventy-seven. Bishop Charles Wordsworth says of him—'He had a large following of



REV. JAMES MACDONALD IN 1812

young men, larger and not less devoted than that which followed Newman—and for a much longer time.’

Queen Charlotte, wife of George III., died September 17, 1818, aged seventy-four. The King had been for some years hopelessly insane, and the Prince Regent had already given ample proof of his disposition, and a foretaste of the qualities that would characterize his reign. The aged Queen was the last remaining bulwark against the dissoluteness of which the throne was soon to be the centre. I take the following extract from a remarkable article which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* a few months after her death.

‘ Among other obligations which we owe to our late lamented and venerable Queen, this is by no means the least, that for half a century she stood forward with unwearied vigilance and unbending resolution as the guardian and protector of public morals. She neither countenanced indecorum by her example, nor would tolerate it in her presence ; and at a time when nearly all the other courts of Europe were open, with little discrimination, to the most abandoned and profligate characters,

she raised around the throne of these realms a barrier which no rank, however exalted, without the additional recommendation of a spotless name, was suffered to pass.'

Sir Walter Scott's comment upon her death was : ' So we have lost the old Queen. I fear the effect of this event on public manners '—a fear that was abundantly realized.

XV

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

' OLDHAM, *February 5, 1819.*

' I AM glad that you succeeded so well in your "demonstrations," and that you have found some of them "very entertaining." Were I in your place I should endeavour, as far as I conceived to be compatible with piety, to acquire a *fondness* for mathematical studies. You need not be informed that it is in vain to look for any more than moral proof in favour of religion, and that Christianity, though a divine science which has God for its author, does not admit of such demonstration as *forces* assent. I do not mean that it is not both *sufficiently* and *satisfactorily* proved ; but that the proofs in its favour may be, and often are, objected to by men of corrupt minds and perverted genius, who demand such evidence for its truth, as, if afforded, would preclude

the possibility of its being rejected. Whether such proof as they demand be in the nature of things possible, is a question; but that Infinite Wisdom has not afforded it is certain. An humble and devotional spirit will find little difficulty in believing the record which God has given of His Son.

‘ I think you will succeed both in classical and in mathematical learning. Your temper, which is far from being as sanguine as mine, is apt to make you under-rate your attainments. But when I consider that few, if any, have for centuries gone to Cambridge with less assistance from others, and that you have in so short a time made such progress, I cannot but think you possess uncommon powers for excelling in every department to which you may apply yourself. The sober happiness consequent on living wholly to God is highly favourable to mental improvement.

‘ I was recently struck with a prayer, which Dr. Johnson wrote when he was entering upon his great work, *The Rambler*. I pray for you several times daily, and believe that God both hears and answers me. I am glad that there are so many young men of pure morals, sound learning, and exemplary conduct in Cambridge.

‘ P.S.—Jane promises to write in my sheet next time.

‘ This sentence has made the girls laugh heartily. Jane is witty, you know, and understands “ my sheet ” in a ludicrous sense.’

XVI

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD
FROM HIS SISTER, MARY ANN

‘OLDHAM, *February* 5, 1819.

‘THE thought that I have a brother who is always willing to contribute to my happiness urges me to acquaint you with the manner in which I have spent too much of my time, that you may give me those instructions that I need. Well, in the first place, I am always making resolutions, and seldom, if ever, keeping them. In this way I live from day to day, always unhappy, because I have not done all that I should like to do. In the morning I make fresh resolutions, in the forenoon and afternoon I break them ; and in the evening I lament that I have spent such an idle day. I feel more deeply than ever the great loss I have sustained in being deprived of my mother. I am often tempted to murmur

that she was taken away from us just at the time when the eye of a mother is most needed. But God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways.

'My father has told you that we have begun to learn French. We have as yet made comparatively little progress, but as perseverance and industry can conquer everything, I ought not to be discouraged. The letter which you sent me from George was quite a religious one. Father has had one since. He expresses a wish that he may be a missionary, if called, and he hopes that he will be.

'We have written three times to Sophia (Bradburn) since you left us, and have received two from her. In her last she mentions the style in which Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gaulter live; they keep a white and a black footman.

'I have already begun to anticipate the pleasure of having you at home, for, you know, though I am sometimes melancholy, I have a *social soul*. I do not mean to insinuate by anything which I have written that we are not comfortable. You will readily perceive that all the uneasiness I feel originates with myself.'

XVII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

‘OLDHAM, *February 27, 1819.*

‘YOURS of the 10th instant, if an “extemporary composition,” proves that you are no mean adept in that species of writing; for had you not informed me that it was written in haste, I should deem it to be the result of considerable time and labour. It gives me pleasure, however carelessly I myself occasionally write, to observe that whatever proceeds from your pen is equally free, on the one hand, from smelling too highly of the lamp, and on the other, from the effects produced by inattention. It was said of Seneca that in all his correspondence he had an eye to his reputation; but though in this I would not hold him up as a model for imitation, I doubt not it is both our interest and our duty

in all we say and in all we write to aim at the improvement of our minds. By accustoming ourselves to develop principles with a sincere and cordial love of truth, and to clothe the result of our reasonings with appropriate language, we acquire, and that insensibly, a facility of conversing with taste, solidity, and judgement. . . . Meantime, it may be proper to observe that reasoning on moral and religious subjects beyond a certain point tends to scepticism and is destructive of devotion, and, I may add, inimical to an increase of true and useful knowledge. To reason when we ought to believe is as absurd as to question the truth of self-evident propositions. Des Cartes showed no great wisdom by professing to doubt everything, and then to prove his own existence by his "Cogito, ergo sum." But I remember that my friend Cicero says that there never was any absurdity that did not find an advocate in some philosopher.

' But to return,—to know the precise point where reasoning should cease and faith commence, is a grand desideratum. About thirty years ago I often, and to my sorrow, proceeded beyond the point in question. An old mariner who has long traversed the ocean,

may, with a good grace, if not "sing," yet tell "the dangers of the seas." In doing this he will be far from falling into the absurdity of the Greek orator who harangued Hannibal upon the art of war. The old Carthaginian captain, as you know, rewarded him for his pains with a smile of contempt.

' I am much pleased with the account you gave me of your interview with Mr. Mandell, and I doubt not that the sober orthodox principles with which your mind is imbued stood you in good stead. The celebrated "Five Points," which, by being violently contended for and against, produced infinite mischief in Holland, ought, when brought forward at all, to be treated as purely theological questions which may be differently and safely decided upon. With you, I am rather surprised that Mr. Mandell should introduce the subject ; but it gives me pleasure to think, when he did, that you were no stranger to the controversy.

' Were I young, and at College, I should strive earnestly for literary honours. To excel in learning is both "lovely and of good report," and consequently, a desirable thing. I think you have during the last vacation

improved your time to good purpose. The only "art of memory" with which I am acquainted is to keep it *diligently employed*. By extemporary preaching it is kept almost continually employed; hence the facility with which those who adopt this method can deliver themselves upon all subjects in which they possess a competent knowledge. . . . Never waste your energies on metaphysical subtleties, as they are rather opposed than favourable to true science. "We know not," said Mr. Wesley to me, "where we shall stop if we indulge ourselves in metaphysical speculations." By them, Arius and Socinus, both great men, destroyed their orthodoxy, and left their heresies as a miserable legacy. Sad patrimony, with a witness!

'After I see George in April, I shall be better able to judge of his piety and improvement in his studies. Meantime, I believe and hope everything good of him. Mary Ann and Jane, who send their kind love to you, are improving rapidly. Peace, love, and harmony reign in my sweet little family.

'I have not yet seen Southey's *Life of Wesley*, but I expect Mr. Radley will procure me a reading of it shortly after its being

published. It will, no doubt, be a *bon morceau*. I have written nothing for the *Magazine* of late, nor do I know when I shall. Mr. Benson, several months since, sent me the first volume of Hughes' *British Antiquities*, the half of which I have not yet had patience to read, nor do I know whether I can with any comfort review it. Mr. Everett, who has a flippant pen, occupies most of the reviewing department. Pardon me when I tell you that I think there is a great falling off in that part of the *Magazine* !

‘ I wrote a long letter to Mr. Benson chiefly made up of my objections to republishing the *Christian Library*. It has been cried up above all due bounds. I am not surprised that there are few Methodists at either Oxford or Cambridge ; nor would that circumstance afford any matter of regret, were piety, without them, generally prevalent in the Universities. I hope the sheep committed to Mr. Simeon's care will not, whether they join the Methodists or no, like the Welsh parson's sheep, “ *become goats*.” I feel no interest in Methodism farther than I conceive it favourable to that “ holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” ’

NOTES

‘ The celebrated *Five Points*.’ These words will have, I imagine, little or no meaning even for well-educated people to-day. The controversies to which they belong are not on the plane of present religious thought. But they meant a good deal in their time. The phrase refers to the five propositions of a ‘ Remonstrance ’ laid before the estates of Holland in 1610, by the Arminian divines, who protested against the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination, the extent of the Atonement, the nature of faith, the resistibility of grace, and the perseverance of saints. Much ink has been shed in the discussion of these questions, some blood also, but the controversy, as such, has never been settled. It has, however, been practically abandoned, and can hardly be said to be a live issue to-day.

Mr. Mandell, Fellow and Tutor of Queens’ College, was great-uncle to Dr. Mandell Creighton, late Bishop of London.

Southey’s *Life of Wesley* was published in April 1820. On the first of March he wrote : ‘ Last night I finished the *Life of Wesley* ; but I have outrun the constable, and it may be

four or five weeks before he comes up to me.' Of a book whose merits and defects are so well known, I need say nothing. Southey's own forecast of its reception is interesting. 'I am inclined to think that it will obtain a moderate sale and a durable reputation. . . . It is written with too fair a spirit to satisfy any particular set of men. For the "religious public" it will be too tolerant and too philosophical; for the Liberals it will be too devotional; the Methodists will not endure any censure of their founder and their institutions; the high Churchman will as little be able to allow any praise of them. Some will complain of it as being heavy and dull; others will not think it serious enough. I shall be abused on all sides, and you well know how little I shall care for it.'

The reference, thus early in Mr. Everett's career, to his 'flippant pen' is interesting. Years afterwards that pen became something more than flippant. The pen with which the 'Flysheets' and sundry lampoons in verse were written might well be described by a severer epithet.

When assisting Mr. Benson in his editorial duties, Mr. Macdonald had occasion to write

to Mr. Everett under the date of May 14, 1816, respecting an article received from him for the *Magazine* : ' We readily admit that you are a good writer, and that your correspondence is an acquisition ; but we are of opinion that you use such harsh epithets as, while they add no strength to your arguments, tend to irritate.'

The drift of Mr. Everett's temper and of his style was evident almost from the outset of his career.

XVIII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

'OLDHAM, *April* 13, 1819.

'A FEW days ago I received an affectionate letter from my friend Mr. Benson. He complains of the immense labour he has in correcting Martindale's *Dictionary*, and tells me that two hundred subscribers have not been obtained for the *Christian Library*. He has positively refused to proceed with it until he takes the sense of the Conference on the subject. He perfectly coincides in opinion with me respecting its contents. I have declined the task of reviewing Hughes' *Horae Britannicae*, as I know little more of antiquities than I do of heraldry.

'I heard Messrs. Bunting and Watson at the Manchester Missionary Meeting. They are no common men. Dr. Clarke was not at

the meeting, and yet the collections were larger than upon any previous occasion. A pleasing motion was put into my hand, on which I spoke for about twenty minutes, and with liberty sufficient to do more than save me from contempt. I felt on the occasion what a man of sensibility is apt to feel on first delivering an extemporaneous discourse before a popular audience. Such as do not preach extempore are equally unacquainted with the pleasures and pains attendant on doing so. I have long proved that the pleasure far more than counterbalances the pain. You know all my sentiments on this subject.

‘Samuel Drew is about publishing a work in two octavo volumes, in which he proposes to demonstrate from reason and Scripture the existence of God, together with His Providence presiding over all things. It sounds a little strange to talk of demonstrating the existence of God from Scripture, in which His existence is taken for granted. I am not sure that the adorable Jehovah, who has fully demonstrated by His works His eternal power and Godhead, is much pleased with metaphysical demonstrations of His existence. With Mr. Wesley, I am persuaded that a blade

of grass more fully proves the being of God than Clarke's laboured "demonstration."

'I had two letters lately from George. They breathe a heavenly spirit, and are written with a wisdom above his years. The vacation commences at The Grove on the 10th of May. I hope you take sufficient exercise for your health. Solitary walking never was capable of recruiting my spirits, but a walk with an intelligent friend has seldom failed to produce that effect. . . . Sanctified learning is a blessing to its possessor, and may be useful to others. Humanly speaking, Methodism would have been strangled in its infancy had not its founder been a man of learning as well as of genius. But I greatly question, if all his assistants and helpers had been literary characters, whether Methodism would at this day stand upon so exalted an eminence. God often works by instruments which worldly wisdom and learning heartily despise. And surely the wisest and best of Christ's ministers are ready to say, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels."

'I must now inform you that there has been considerable affliction in my sweet family. Jane has been ill for about a fort-

night of a complaint similar to that which so alarmed us in London. We know not that she is in a dangerous state. She has medical assistance and every kind attention that each individual in the house can pay her. She is in her gracious Father's hands, who best knows how to dispose of her. Make her case a matter of prayer, and see that it does not too much affect your spirits. . . . How often have I, next to God, found a refuge from trouble in my books and studies ! Life is at best a chequered scene, but it is both manly and Christian to hope the best, and make the best of everything. "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue"; but there are eternal realities worthy of all our care and attention.'

NOTES

Mr. Macdonald was, for various reasons, strongly opposed to the republication of the *Christian Library*. This compilation, made by Wesley, chiefly for the instruction of his preachers, is described as 'Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgements of, the choicest pieces of Practical Divinity which

have been published in the English Tongue. In fifty volumes. By John Wesley, M.A., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, 1749-1755.' This ponderous publication had been of service to many of the early preachers and more thoughtful members of the Methodist Society, but its day was over, its mission exhausted. Of this Mr. Macdonald was sure. It was, however, republished in 1825, in thirty octavo volumes. By a paradox with which publishers are not unacquainted, this republication formally terminated the career of the *Christian Library*, consigning it to oblivion that will never be disturbed.

It should be observed that Mr. Macdonald speaks of the Manchester missionary meeting as the occasion of his 'first extemporary discourse before a popular audience.' This is indeed suggestive of an important difference between the life of a Methodist preacher, may I say, in my grandfather's day, and in mine. They were men of the pulpit, not of the platform. Popular meetings had hardly come into existence. Their origin in Methodism may be ascribed to the Missionary Society and its operations. Missionary meetings were coming into vogue at the time when this letter

was written, furnishing a new sphere of service, and making new demands upon the gifts of the ministers. After thirty-five years in the ministry my grandfather made his first speech at a popular meeting. I will not contrast my experience with his, but it is amusing to think of it.

XIX

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

' OLDHAM, *April 27, 1819.*

' I DID not in my last inform you of all the causes which prevented my writing sooner ; but now I can tell you the delay arose from my hope that Jane would get better. How slight was the ground of that hope you will partly learn from what Mary Ann has said on the subject. Jane is in a heavenly state of mind, and only waits for a larger manifestation of the love of God to enable her to go in triumph to her blessed Saviour, with whom is her dear mother, who will rejoice to see her escaped from a world of sin and sorrow. We have given up all hope of her recovery, for nothing short of a miracle—which it would be wrong to expect—can preserve her many weeks, nor perhaps even days, in the land

of the living. I cannot tell you all I feel, but through mercy I am wonderfully supported. All will be for ever well with Jane. She is gradually coming to her happy end with all the meekness and wisdom of an angel in a human body. At Middleton, yesterday evening, I had in private a remarkably blessed time while praying for her and the rest of my sweet family. You and I are now called to show the piety of Christians and the reason of men, and if "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better," your heart and mine will be amended by the present painful dispensation. I feel none of the stoical apathy manifested by an ancient Roman who manifested the same countenance on the death of his two sons that he did when honoured with a triumph. No; for the religion of Jesus is, though a happy one, a religion of feeling. "Scorn the proud man who is ashamed to weep."

'I would have you write as soon as possible to Jane. You may direct the letter to me, and write part of it to me exclusively. All your letters are common property among us.

'I have received the volume of *Newton's Letters* I mentioned to you, and hope to forward

the review of it, with another article, to Mr. Benson in the course of the week.

‘ The latter is a review of a pamphlet written in answer to a piece published by Dr. Hawker, in which he says : “ The successors of the Apostles *dare* not invite sinners *indiscriminately* to partake of the blessings of the Covenant, which are *intended for none but the Elect*.” Now, this is to be *practically*, as well as *theoretically*, wrong, though I think it quite consistent with the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation.

‘ I intend to speak sweetly and peacefully of pious Calvinists, and to give from Henry, Hooker, Bishop Hopkins, and Joseph Alleine some specimens of the way in which the old warm-hearted and pious Calvinists addressed the unconverted. I wish to be a man of peace and love, and I thank God that I feel my heart united to all, whatever their opinions may be, who love the Lord Jesus.

‘ I would have you say very little, unless you know well to whom, on the popular subjects of debate at Cambridge. Leave to those who know not how to employ their time better the task of contending for and against *opinions*, and contend for the truth

which is after godliness. I doubt not that men of piety, as well as of sense and learning, have contended for baptismal regeneration ; but I fear that most of the modern advocates of that doctrine have but very defective and incorrect views of the gospel plan of salvation. But be these things as they may, we know that God hath “ showed us what is good,” and that our main business is to be holy in heart and life.

‘ On the 10th of next month we expect to see George here. I had a letter from him a few days ago, in which he expresses himself on the subject of his experience in a manner which would give you pleasure. My dear James, take care of your health. I say nothing to you on the subject of your studies, for on that head you need no stimulus. May the Lord have you in His good keeping.’

XX

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

‘OLDHAM, *May* 12, 1819.

‘YOUR letter to Jane is in every respect what it ought to be. The Lord gives you distinct views both of His law and gospel, views which are highly favourable to growth in holiness. Without claiming by faith the fulfilment of the promises, we should be continually depressed with a sense of the defects which cleave to our obedience ; and without considering the law as a rule of life which we are bound to walk by, we shall become speculative, if not practical, Antinomians. To make faith a substitute for holiness is to reverse the end for which Christ came into the world.

‘ You see I have so far written as if my dear Jane was well, or in a fair way of recovery. But, alas ! neither the one nor the other is the case. She is calmly and sweetly coming to

the end of her journey. She speaks of her removal to a world of spirits with the utmost composure. Last night she told me she was not afraid to die ; and I am certain her hope is well founded. She does not suffer very much, but is extremely weak. She is never left alone five minutes together.

‘ Last Saturday George arrived here in safety. He is all that I expected to find him. He is happy in the love of God, and as free from rant and enthusiasm as you or I could desire. He has succeeded amazingly well in his learning. He construed to me the other day the verses in which Mr. Mandell examined you on your going to Cambridge, and was amused to think that he himself could stand such an examination.

‘ Our District Meeting is to be held next Tuesday, on the evening before which, Mr. Stephens informs me by letter, I am expected to preach in Oldham Street Chapel.

‘ You must hasten down as soon as convenient after your vacation commences, in order to see George before his return to The Grove. Tell me the meaning of a scholarship, and what pecuniary and literary advantages are attached to yours.’

XXI

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

'OLDHAM, *June 2, 1819.*

'FOR more than a fortnight past it was thought that every day would have been dear Jane's last on earth ; but she is still alive and may possibly survive a few days longer. Her mind is calm and happy. Last Monday fortnight, being in much pain, she broke out into prayer, and among other things said, "O blessed Jesus, all my sufferings are little to what Thou didst endure for me." And then she exclaimed, "O Mary Ann, I am happy ! My sufferings are nothing." We are all wonderfully supported, for "the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." The company of George at this time contributes much to my comfort. He is a most lovely, steady, pious boy. He is the

delight of all his acquaintances, and he has many. Surely no man was ever more blessed with children than I.

‘I was enabled at our District Meeting to preach with liberty and power from 2 Thess. iii. 1: “Finally, brethren, pray for us,” &c. Our District Meeting was one of the most comfortable I ever attended.

‘I wish you, when in London, to call upon Mr. Atmore, Mr. Benson, Dr. Hamilton, Mr. Hunter, Mr. Tagg, and Mr. Bradburn. Give my love to them all.’

NOTE

Jane Macdonald died on the 7th of June, 1819, five days after this letter was written. She was sixteen years and four months old. Two days before she died her brother James arrived from Cambridge. ‘The sight of him,’ writes her sister Mary Ann, ‘gave my dear sister unspeakable pleasure. Her countenance beamed with affection, though she was only able to say a few words to him.’ The whole family was present when she passed away. She was buried in the Methodist chapel-yard, June 11, 1819.

XXII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

‘OLDHAM, *July 2, 1819.*

‘ I LEARN from a letter written by Mr. Stephenson that according to expectation, I am appointed to the Todmorden Circuit. I receive all my appointments as from God, fully persuaded that He fixes the bounds of my habitation. His wise, kind, and gracious Providence has provided for me ever since I had a being. He has led me by ways I had not known, and by ways in which I was naturally indisposed to walk ; but I know He has led me aright.

‘ I am happy to inform you that Mary Ann is not only getting well, but recovering her spirits. She has borne the death of her only sister with the resignation of a saint. She and you, though children of the same parents, are of very different, if not opposite, tempera-

ments. She is sanguine, with a sufficient mixture of melancholy ; you are phlegmatic, with all the advantages attached to that complexion. While your mind would pore upon every deviation from what is just, equitable, or proper, hers would, as if impelled by a sort of elasticity, rise above whatever is depressing, and be happy in spite of contingencies. I do not notice the contrast between two so deservedly dear to me with a design to lessen the worth of either of them. You are both inexpressibly dear to me, and will, I trust, contribute largely to my happiness during my stay on earth.

‘When in the foregoing paragraph I said you were phlegmatic, I did not mean that you were either dull or unkind, for I know you are neither one nor the other ; but that you are naturally prone not to make sufficient allowance for infirmities inseparable from humanity. The present is an imperfect state of things, and consequently suited for imperfect creatures in a state of trial for eternity. The different, nay opposite, temperaments and views of such creatures are designed by infinite wisdom to afford them means of moral and religious improvement. There is a sense in

which we may see God, not only in whatever He *does* but *suffers* to be done. And we know that "all things work together for good to them that love Him." He, though infinitely wise, as well as good, bears with the weaknesses and follies of His rational offspring on earth. What patience, then, ought we to exercise toward all who may happen to offend us! I am not surprised that all with whom I converse do not in every instance please me, since I never please myself for half a day together.

' As I am on the subject of social happiness or misery, I shall take the liberty of saying a few things of myself. The grand reason why I suffer so little in company is that I generally, as we say, "take the labouring oar" in my own hand, and, instead of receiving impressions of an unpleasant nature, endeavour to make those of an opposite description. In me the social principle is strong, and if from those with whom I often converse I do not receive my own with usury, I avoid the uneasiness consequent on listening to what is not worth hearing. Meanwhile, I am aware that it is possible to say too much even upon rational and divine subjects. I love solitude, yet I often talk in my own defence, that I may not

be punished by listening to conversation as uninteresting to me as that of children at a game of marbles. Be this my apology for what in me may sometimes appear garrulity. The sweet music of speech is to me preferable to the notes of Madame Catalani.

‘ Still, I would not insinuate that all companies are equally pleasing to me : far from it ; but when not favoured with such as I could wish, I endeavour to make the most of those with whom my lot is cast. Such men as Hunter and Radley seldom come my way ; but I can be happy without them. It is well as regards happiness to be as much as possible independent of contingencies, and to be content with such things as we have. This is religion, aye, and philosophy.

‘ It is probable that one great reason why I have suffered so little from mankind is that my life has been so equally divided between the active and the contemplative. I am, as you know, both naturally and habitually disposed to view things in the most favourable light ; and I thank God for such a temper. Mine has been a happy life ; nor do I, though in my fifty-ninth year, feel any more of the symptoms of age than I did when in my

twenty-third. I do not mention these things to give myself credit on their account, but as a piece of living history for the matter of which I am unfeignedly thankful to the Parent of all Good. Surely no man has any ground for glorying in himself.

‘I request you to come over to Oldham to-morrow week, that you may assist us to pack for our removal. I wish you could get to Harrogate for a week or more, as, from what I have lately read, the waters there would be of great use to you.’

XXIII

TO MASTER GEORGE MACDONALD,
Woodhouse Grove Academy

‘OLDHAM, *August 11, 1819.*

‘ I HAVE not received a line from you since your leaving us after the last vacation. I think, however, that you must have written, but that your letter has miscarried. Present my kind love to Mr. Parker and tell him that I hope to write to him shortly after my arrival at Todmorden. We are to set off for that place next Wednesday. James is here, and busy packing my books. We have been consulting how you may best be disposed of in October, but cannot yet fully decide. You are, however, in the hands of your Heavenly Father, who will, if you acknowledge Him in all your ways, never fail to direct your paths. Cleave to Him, my dear George, with all your heart, and He will do great things for you.’

XXIV

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
at Mr. Bridge's

‘TODMORDEN, *August* 19, 1819.

‘ ABOUT twenty minutes after one o'clock I and my dear family arrived, through the good providence of God, at our new habitation. I had the pleasure of a few minutes' conversation with Mr. Bartholomew before his departure. Mary Ann seems nothing the worse for her journey. We are not rightly settled yet. I have already seen several of my old friends, all of whom congratulate me upon my coming among them. I trust the great Head of the Church will own my labours in this part of His vineyard. In the course of six weeks I have to preach on the week-days but about ten times. I should have no objection to more work. But I need never be idle, and I hope I never shall. If I could plan a literary work I could not find a more favourable time for executing it.

‘I have written these few lines in haste at Caleb Fielden’s. The quietness and gentleness of the people here surprise me after witnessing so long the rough manners of the people in and about Oldham.’

NOTE

Mr. Macdonald speaks of ‘old friends’ whom he found at Todmorden. This was his second appointment to the Todmorden Circuit, he having been stationed there in the years 1807–1809. At that time he resided at Heptonstall, ‘a little town on the round top of a very high mountain, with a steep descent on every side,’ as Wesley described it. The Todmorden Valley is well known to those who travel between Manchester and the West Riding of Yorkshire. In spite of forge and factory, tall chimneys and the smoke they give out, much of its beauty still remains. In the spring of 1755, Wesley wrote, after preaching near Todmorden : ‘One can hardly conceive anything more delightful than the vale through which we rode from thence. The river ran through the green meadows on the right. The fruitful hills and woods rose on either hand.’

XXV

TO GEORGE B. MACDONALD,
Woodhouse Grove School

‘TODMORDEN, *October 16, 1819.*

‘A FEW days since I received a letter from Mr. Stoner, informing me that the Woodhouse Grove Committee had resolved that George Macdonald, on account of his promising capacity, be allowed to remain another year in the School, on condition of his being employed as an Assistant Teacher, and his father paying £12 to the Institution.

‘Mr. Stoner adds: “It is not intended that his whole time should be employed in teaching, only a part of every day. The resolution of the Committee meets with my entire approval.”

‘The circumstance of your having to devote part of every day to teaching is to me *highly* satisfactory, as your being so employed will

make you still better acquainted with the rudiments of Latin and Greek, and be an additional stimulus to urge you forward in your studies. By *teaching* we *learn*, and by having to go often over the various parts of grammar with those whom we instruct, we become as well acquainted with them as with the table of pence. See that you get thoroughly founded in the Greek as well as in the Latin Grammar, and that you read, and always with care and attention, as much as possible in the best Greek and Latin authors. In the course of this year you may learn more than you have ever yet learned, though, for your time, you have succeeded very well. Do not lose a *moment* of time. The time spent in such exercise as is necessary to health is not lost.

‘ I would have you to carry a Greek Testament with you wherever you go, that when you have a few minutes’ leisure you may read some part of it. By doing this you will in a comparatively short time become familiar with every part of it, and be able to quote from it with as much ease as others quote from the English Version. Be sure to live near to God by watchfulness and prayer. Without

gloom, be a pattern of *seriousness*. . . . The progress you have made is highly to your master's credit as well as your own ; but you are still like a potter's vessel upon the wheel, and it will largely depend upon yourself whether you are to be made or marred.

‘ I would have you be on your guard against rusticity of manners. Whenever you speak either to your Governor or Tutor, address him as a gentleman. Study ease and propriety in your conversation, and never talk carelessly. Keep at an equal distance from drawling on the one hand, and precipitancy on the other. Be thoroughly sincere and upright, and let your language be that of the heart. Meantime, let it be remembered, *he is a fool who, upon every occasion, speaks all his mind.*

NOTE

The Secretary of the Woodhouse Grove School Committee was the Rev. David Stoner. He entered the ministry in 1814 and died in 1826, and is remembered for the extraordinary spiritual power that characterized his preaching.

In the offer of an additional year at school for my father, then just fourteen years of age,

it will be seen that generosity was tempered by discretion to an extent that somewhat took the bloom from off it. But there is a family tradition, which I hope is true, that that *twelve pounds* remains unpaid to this day! Perhaps its non-payment was connived at. It is clear, however, that Mr. Macdonald counted the extra year a great boon. His exhortations to his younger son to become a scholar and a Christian are pathetic in their earnestness.

XXVI

TO GEORGE B. MACDONALD,
Woodhouse Grove School

“TODMORDEN, *April 27, 1820.*

‘ I REJOICE in the prospect of having you at home for a few weeks shortly. Considering the severity of the winter, it was well you did not come here at Christmas. Mr. Laycock and I have agreed that you and his James are to walk home. You are to come as far as Halifax the day you leave the Grove. Mr. Myles or Mr. Whiteside will procure you both lodging and food. You may walk the next forenoon to Heptonstall, and stop there all night, or ride Mr. Laycock’s pony to Todmorden after dinner. I should be ashamed to think that you would regard walking twelve, or fifteen, or even twenty miles for a day or two together as a hardship. You can rest yourselves for an hour or two at Mr. Elwell’s of Shelf. Give my kind respects to Mr. and Mrs. Elwell. They will be glad to see you.’

XXVII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Queens' College, Cambridge

'TODMORDEN, *May 10, 1820.*

'DR. MILNER'S death will be seriously regretted by all in Queens' who had sufficient sense and piety to appreciate his worth. I say *piety* as well as sense, for notwithstanding his acknowledged greatness as a scholar, his worth would not have been much superior to that of Professor Porson, had he disgraced his clerical profession either by ignorance of evangelical religion, or by a life of immorality. But he was one of the just whose "memory is blessed."

'I am glad that your new Master is so respectable, on several accounts. I do not forget on the subject of voting that although the lot be cast into the lap, the disposal thereof is of the Lord. There was some wise reason why Mr. Mandell, though so near it, missed his election.

‘ George, who is very well, is requested by Mr. and Mrs. Martindale, with whom it seems he is a great favourite, to remain at the Grove for about a fortnight after the commencement of the vacation. He is to meet me at Bradford in Whitsun-week, where I am to be at the Missionary District Meeting. I have had two letters from Mary Ann, who is now at Delph. She writes with the wisdom of age, and the piety of a genuine Christian. Never was man more truly blessed in his children than I am ! May I be truly thankful.

‘ I know that Martyn, whose life I have recently read, was a man of eminent piety, zeal, and learning ; but his religious views were too gloomy. Reading him and David Brainerd has a tendency to produce melancholy. I love a *cheerful* religion, and such an one is that of the New Testament. “ We are,” said St. Paul, “ exceeding joyful in all our tribulations.” I do not mean that those men were not far more religious than myself ; but I am sure their gloom and melancholy constituted no part of religion. I partly blame their Calvinism for the lamentation and mourning and woe expressed in their diaries.

‘On the fourth instant there was a missionary meeting held in our chapel at Heptonstall. It was numerously attended, as was one in our chapel here the following evening. Mr. Myles presided in both the meetings. In my “Academy” I have between forty and fifty pupils; at the progress in grammar of several of them you would be surprised. I will venture to say that two or three of them understand the English Grammar better than three-fourths of those that enter at the University. I spend about an hour and a half with them every Saturday, and that very pleasantly. I believe that they all love and dread me.

‘The *everlasting proving* of the truth of Christianity puts me in mind of a line in Pope’s *Dunciad* :

And prove a thing till all men doubt it.

Madame Roland was converted to infidelity by reading English works in proof of the Christian religion.

‘He that is tolerably acquainted with Paley’s *Evidences*, Grotius on Christianity, and Jenkins on the same subject, knows almost all that can be urged in proof of Divine Revela-

tion. Bishop Horne and Dr. Watson on the subject in question are worth reading, and so is Leland.

‘ But are we to be for ever proving what has long since been proved sufficiently ? I scarcely meet with anything modern on the subject worth my reading. After all their proving, a speculative man, if destitute of Christian experience, will frequently find himself a sceptic. O James ! it is Christ in us, the hope of glory, which alone can *demonstrate* the truth and certainty of Christianity. Other proofs go a great length, but that is *decisive*.

‘ Has Samuel Benson returned to College ? His father has completely recovered from his late illness ; but I am afraid Mr. Gaulter is ill, as no mention was made of him in the list of preachers appointed to preach at the late Anniversary of the Methodist Missionary Society in London. Nine of our preachers have died since last Conference. I do not think that there are in our Connexion more than fifteen or sixteen effective men who have travelled longer than myself. My past life appears so short that I am surprised to think that towards the end of next month, if the Lord spare me, I shall enter on my sixtieth

year. I see I might have been abundantly more wise and holy ; but I have an Advocate with the Father, and in and through Him I am accepted and happy.

‘I hope the number of pious students at Cambridge is increasing. The time has arrived when, in this country, a clergyman must be pious, and preach the gospel, or be contemptible in the eyes of the generality of his parishioners. The Church Missionary Society greatly prospers.’

NOTES

Mr. Macdonald's remarks on the value and limits of Christian apologetics appear to me to be eminently wise. He did not underestimate the Evidence writers, nor did he expect too much from them.

As a scholar and a thinker, he was at one with the most illiterate of his fellow Methodists in believing that the supreme evidence of Christianity is that which it furnishes to those who believe and practise it. The experimental proof is the last and the best.

Paley has, in later times, been abundantly depreciated, and Grotius is to the moderns

little more than a name ; but each of them succeeded in doing what he attempted to do, and served his generation well. The apologists of one age seldom appeal very powerfully to the mind of another, but that is no matter of reproach to them. While the Bible remains the same, the way in which it is criticized or attacked continually varies, and the most powerful defence may come to be obsolete together with the modes of thought to which it is addressed.

Of Grotius (1583-1645), one of the most famous men of the seventeenth century, Mr. Macdonald writes in his *Life of Benson* : ‘ On the morning of September 5, 1777, he came to the end of that unanswerable work written by Grotius, *On the Truth of Christianity*, a work which, being written in Latin, and by such a master of language as well as of argument, will secure its being read in every future age. It may be considered the father of modern apologies for Christianity. “ It is an admirable performance,” said Benson, “ and perfectly convincing upon the subject. I rejoice to find the truth of a religion on which I rest my everlasting all so evidently demonstrated.” ’

With this may be compared the judgement of Dr. Johnson : ‘ As to the Christian religion, beside the strong evidence which we have for it, there is a balance in its favour from the number of great men who have been convinced of its truth after serious consideration of the question. Grotius was an acute man, a lawyer, accustomed to examine evidence, and he was convinced. Grotius was not a recluse, but a man of the world, who certainly had no bias to the side of religion.’

XXVIII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
*At Mr. Bridge's, Near the Methodist Chapel,
Rochdale*

‘LIVERPOOL, *August 1, 1820.*

‘I HAVE often thought of you since my arrival here, and indulged a hope that God would bless some means in order to the recovery of your health. Mr. Bunting makes a very excellent President, and Mr. G. Marsden does well enough for a Secretary. Perhaps I have never been at a more agreeable Conference than this. Mr. Atmore stops a third year in London, and Samuel Taylor and Joseph Sutcliffe are to be removed. Mr. Vevers will probably be continued at Hebden Bridge. A Mr. Emory, a Preacher from the United States, and a very respectable one, preached an excellent sermon in Brunswick Chapel last Sunday morning. The Methodists

in America have increased near 20,000 the past year, and we have decreased 5,000. This latter circumstance we regret much, but trust that the tide of success will turn again in our favour.

‘I think a way will be made for George at the Conference Office. I long much to hear from you, and trust that you will be able to give me some comfortable account of your health. This is such a time of bustle and hurry as to prevent me from writing with any degree of regularity. I have seen several of my old Liverpool friends, who, I found, remembered me with warm affection.’

NOTES

Mr. Macdonald was stationed in Liverpool in the year 1799–1800, and the old friends to whom he refers date from that period. At the time of writing this letter he was attending the Conference, of which Mr. Bunting, then in the twenty-first year of his ministry, was President. As is well known, Mr. Bunting was President of the Conference four times, in 1820, 1828, 1836, and 1844. Mr. Macdonald passes somewhat lightly over the large decrease

of membership reported. It was by no means symptomatic of general decline of vitality in Methodism. In the ten years, 1815-25, the members in the Societies increased by more than 52,000. But the exceptional and unlooked-for decrease in the year 1819-20 of 4,688 touched the Conference very deeply, and gave rise to heart-searching inquiry. The question, 'What measures can we adopt for the increase of spiritual religion among our Societies?' was discussed at length and with much feeling. As a result, an important series of 'Minutes' was adopted, henceforth known as 'The Liverpool Minutes,' containing resolutions and directions respecting personal religion and pastoral fidelity and zeal, which the Conference directed should in future be read and solemnly considered by the ministers in their Annual District Meeting. They constitute one of the most notable and impressive documents in the history of Methodism. The following year an increase of more than 10,000 members was reported, and at the Conference of 1822 a still larger increase.

The appearance of the Rev. John Emory, of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, at this Liverpool Conference was an event of

much interest and importance. He was the first delegate from that Church to the British Conference. He was officially appointed to secure the adjustment of certain questions affecting the relative positions in Canada of the British and American Methodist bodies, and to arrange for that periodical interchange of delegates which has continued, with great advantage, to the present time. The first representatives of the British Conference to America were the Revs. Richard Reece and John Hannah, who attended the session of the General Conference at Baltimore in 1824. In 1880, in company with the Rev. William Arthur, I had the honour of representing British Methodism at the General Conference held in Cincinnati.

XXIX

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Liverpool

‘TODMORDEN, *October 7, 1820.*

‘YESTERDAY, your long-looked-for and most welcome letter arrived. I had lately been very uneasy on your account, for though my temperament generally leads me to hope the best, I sometimes fear the worst. We are all delighted to think that you are in a fair way of obtaining a complete cure. How graciously and wisely does God watch over all our affairs! And to what valuable purposes in our favour does He often overrule seemingly casual events! My appointment to Mr. Hope’s at the time of Conference was connected with my becoming acquainted with Mr. Hick; and that event with his visiting you, and all the pleasing consequences. I suppose you know that he neither expects nor would accept of any remuneration for acting as your medical attendant. Mr. Hope informs me

that he speaks of you in terms the most honourable. God raises us up useful friends just at the very time we need them, for the purpose of promoting His own glory and our present and future welfare. It was the opinion of several of the Ancients that no man is happy who has not suffered, and learnt some important lessons from what he has suffered. "It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth."

' Mary Ann is very well, and exceedingly happy to learn that you are so much better. George was to stop a few days at Mr. Elwell's on his return home. I have not yet heard the result of my negotiation with Mr. Blanshard on his case, but I hope to hear it in a few days. I saw George at Bradford, and he came and slept with me at Shelf. He has made amazing progress in his learning the past year. He is a serious, steady, pious, lovely youth.

NOTE

This letter gives the first intimation that the state of his son's health was not satisfactory. It will be seen that the life that was opening with such intellectual and spiritual promise was soon to be cut short. I take the following from a memorandum written by Mary Ann Macdonald:

‘On his return home at the vacation we were very much concerned to perceive that my brother’s close application to study had injured his health. He had the best medical advice, which, together with the relaxation from severe study, so far restored him as to enable him to return to Cambridge the next term. The letters we received from him during the term were of an encouraging nature, but on his return home we were distressed to see a something in his appearance which indicated that his constitution was undermined. During this vacation my dear brother spent many weeks at the seaside, as it was thought the change of air would be of service to him. He derived benefit from his visit, and thought himself quite able to continue his studies. At the close of the vacation he returned to Queens’, but his disease, which proved to be a decline, began rapidly to gain ground, so that in February 1821 he was obliged to leave Cambridge, with but faint hope of ever returning.’

After leaving Cambridge James appears to have spent some time with his old and attached friend, Mr. Bridge, then living at Rochdale; from whom he would receive all the care and attention in his power,

XXX

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Mr. Bridge's, Rochdale

‘TODMORDEN, *April 6, 1821.*

‘THIS day a letter for you from Cambridge, which I forward to you by Miss Hill. I hope your general health continues to improve, and that tedious as the complaint in your foot has been, and I may add painful, you will yet be restored to perfect health. I continue to gather strength, the whole of which I wish to spend in the service of Him whose “favour is better than life.”

‘We have received several copies of the *Wesleyan Missionary Report*. Upwards of £37,000 has been expended on our Missions during the past year; a sum greater by about £6,000 than has been laid out in the Church Missions. There is a glorious work carrying on in the earth. “Many run to and fro,”

and knowledge of the best sort is, I trust, increased. It gives me pleasure to think that I have been, notwithstanding numberless imperfections, so many years a labourer in the harvest of my Lord. I have known much of what is good, and something of what is evil under the sun. But in the natural course of things I shall, in a few years at the farthest, leave this world of shadows. As I advance in years I feel myself, though substantially happy, and I hope truly grateful, less attached to life. Let us, my dear James, live more than ever for eternity. Our souls, our bodies, with all our concerns, are in the hands of Him who loves us infinitely more than we can love one another.'

XXXI

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD,
Rochdale

‘TODMORDEN, *May 8, 1821.*

‘I HAD hoped to attend the Missionary Meeting at Rochdale on Thursday week, but as I shall have so much to do in making up the collections for the District Meeting, which is to be held on the Tuesday following, I must relinquish that hope. Solomon says, “All things are full of labour,” and I find the longer I live the more I have to do. I now wonder how it was that amidst my ministerial labours many years ago I found so much time for the study of different languages. For everything there is a time and a season. In the pursuit of knowledge the chief pleasure is in the chase. Our souls can never rest upon anything short of the Infinite. May that Infinite Being, who is the fountain of life, and who includes

in Himself absolute and supreme perfection, be our portion in time and in eternity.'

NOTE

'In the pursuit of knowledge *the chief pleasure is in the chase.*' Perhaps Mr. MacDonald had in his mind the words of Butler in his sermon upon the Ignorance of Man: 'Whoever will in the least attend to the thing will see that it is the gaining of it (knowledge), not the having of it, which is the entertainment of the mind.'

XXXII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD

‘MANCHESTER, *July 23, 1821.*

‘I INDULGE the hope that your health is improving. I spent about an hour this forenoon with Messrs. Griffith and Gaulter, and have dined in company with Mr. Watson. It seems the Book Concern is not in a flourishing state. It is still doubtful who shall be our President ; nor is its being so a matter of very great moment, for whoever may fill that office, matters will proceed in their usual course. From all that I have heard I conclude that our members in Ireland have decreased last year, and that they have, but I know not to what extent, increased in England.’

‘*Wednesday, July 25.*

‘This morning Mr. George Marsden was elected President by a middling majority.

Messrs. Tobias and Deery are here from Ireland. I find that more of the preachers have read my *Address* than I imagined. Mr. Moore met me with the warmth of old genuine friendship. He looks very well. It is thought this will be a rather short Conference, but I have my doubts upon that subject. All the preachers appear in a good, sweet spirit.'

' *July 28.*

' This morning I was happy to receive your affectionate letter. I am much obliged to our Rochdale friends for paying you a visit, and to Mr. Ramsbottom for his valuable present to you. The regular routine of business affords little news. Mr. Bunting is to be Editor, *but no longer than three years.* Some want itinerant editors; but that plan cannot succeed. Many of the preachers know that I am requested to write Mr. Benson's life. I have had a letter from Samuel Benson since I came here. As he and his brother had not read many of the papers in their hands, they propose to send them to me when I arrive in my new circuit.'

NOTE

The Rev. Joseph Benson died February 16, 1821, in the seventy-fourth year of his age. As a preacher, a theologian, and a scholar, and, in respect of his personal qualities as a man and a Christian, he had no superior in the Methodist ministry during the quarter of a century that followed the death of Wesley. He was for many years Mr. Macdonald's most dear and honoured friend. Each of them well knew the other's mind, and on the death of Benson Mr. Macdonald was requested to be his biographer. This office he fulfilled with a promptitude seldom attained in such matters. The *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson* were published the following year, the preface bearing the date September 15, 1822.

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XXXIII

TO MR. JAMES MACDONALD
Todmorden

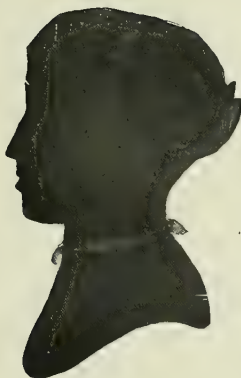
‘MANCHESTER, *August 1, 1821.*

‘ I FEEL the air of this place oppress me exceedingly, and I shall be glad to get out of the smoke of Manchester. The Conference goes on well, and it is thought will conclude this week. Mr. Laycock is likely to be removed from Holmfirth to New Mills, near Stockport. There is no probability of my being removed from Dewsbury. I hear an excellent account of the house we are to occupy there. I hope the Lord will be with us, and then all will be well. This hardly deserves the name of a letter, but I know, however little I write, you are always pleased to hear from

‘ Your most affectionate Father.’



JAMES C. MACDONALD, 1817



JANE MACDONALD, 1817

NOTE

This is Mr. Macdonald's last letter to his son. The consumption against which James had been fighting for a year or more with, as it seemed, some success, now set in swift and irresistible. Soon after the removal to Dewsbury it became manifest that he had not long to live. The promise of his devout and studious youth was to have other fulfilment than that on which his family had reckoned. What this meant to his father may be gathered, in part, from the letters that have been given. Mr. Macdonald's hopes and affections were centred in his son James. The intimacy between them was such as is rarely possible in the case of a father and a son. It had in it elements of companionship, of intellectual and spiritual kinship, in which the elder renewed his youth, and the younger seemed to attain full manhood before the time. How the father opened his mind to his son concerning life and literature, religion and theology, and sought in turn his son's judgments and opinions, has been abundantly shown, together with the deep and tender affection that bound them together. The

loss, now imminent, was one for which there could be no earthly compensation.

His sister Mary Ann has left some touching records of her brother's last days. George was sent for from Bradford, and they knelt together, father and children, by the deathbed of their son and brother. He dictated a letter to a college friend, and gave his watch to his sister, and his Bible to his brother. After some uneasiness and conflict, he became calm and cheerful. Towards the end he repeated the lines :

Me for Thine own Thou lovest to take
In time and in eternity ;
Thou never, never wilt forsake
A helpless worm that trusts in Thee.

He died on September 27, 1821, aged twenty-five years and four months.

XXXIV

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD
2, Craven Street, City Road, London

‘PORTSEA, *April 11, 1823.*

‘All your letters, but especially the last, afford me much pleasure. I am glad to learn that you are judiciously employing your time, and fill it up to such good purpose. I wish you to be a complete master of Greek and Latin, as well as a man of general information. Your miscellaneous reading will prove to you a useful relaxation. Do not hurry through the works you peruse, but take sufficient time to enter into their sense and spirit. Many read much, and are little the wiser. . . .

‘Fear not ; the Lord is, and will be, your salvation. He liberally gives to all that ask, nor does He upbraid for their past sins and present unfitness. While we maintain the doctrine of General Redemption we must

not lay too much stress on human agency. Unless God works in us to will and to do we shall work to no valuable purpose. Continue instant in prayer, and do not be surprised if at times you feel little life or power in the performance of that duty. The present state of things does not admit of our being always alike happy. Joy, you know, is but a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Let it be our business to press after holiness, and we shall be sufficiently happy. Avoid, as far as possible, all extremes, and maintain true dignity of character. Imitate me in avoiding evil speaking. I trust you do. Without constant watchfulness one falls into that sin unawares. I am delighted in reading Massillon in French.'

NOTES

Mr. Macdonald's dislike of evil speaking was a marked feature of his character. When it was indulged in in his presence his disapproval would take the form of conspicuous silence, and, upon occasion, of reproof that would not be forgotten. It is said that in one instance where an absent person was spoken of by one and another in severe terms, after

endeavouring to give another turn to the conversation he silenced the company by saying, 'This must indeed be a bad man; let us pray for him,' kneeling down then and there and offering a prayer on his behalf. He heard no more evil speaking from those who were present on that occasion.

By the same post George Macdonald received a long letter from his sister Mary Ann, from which the following is an extract :

'Your being in London, though it now gives me great pleasure, caused me at first much uneasiness. I feared lest you should be led astray by gay, thoughtless young men, who appear to take a hellish delight in corrupting others. I am glad that you go to the Saturday night meetings. I used regularly to attend them when in London. My dear mother frequently told me not to leave any particular work to be done on a Saturday night, but to allow myself time for reading and prayer as a preparation of the Sabbath. I often indulge the delightful thought that I shall yet be honoured by having a brother as well as a father, a preacher of the gospel.

'The 29th of this month is my birthday. May I expect that you will favour me with

a poetical effusion? Yes, I will expect; so do not disappoint me. My dear brother James wrote me a piece the April before he died, but he had not strength nor spirit to finish it.'

XXXV

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *April* 23, 1823.

‘ I PRESUME you would be willing to hear from me could I give you no more information than what was formerly found in the first sentence of *every* letter ; i.e., “ These few lines come to inform you that we are all in good health, hoping that they will find you the same.” I trust by this time you enjoy more confidence in the God of all grace, and that you are enabled, not only to walk in the fear of God but also in the comfort of His Holy Spirit. At various times your consolations will ebb and flow. Those fluctuations are consequent upon the nature of things.

‘ The judicious manner in which you divide your time, and the variety of your studies, will tend to preserve you from *ennui*, and contribute much towards the stability of your

health. I flatter myself you will excel in everything which is lovely and of good report. You are now my *only* son on earth, and much of my comfort depends on you. Give yourself to prayer, and reduce to practice the maxims of prudence laid up in your mind, and you will increase in favour with God and man. Study self-command, and be sufficiently deliberate in your conversation. Keep little company ; in general the less the better. I know we need relaxation ; the great point is to have it, innocent and instructive.'

XXXVI

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *May* 12, 1823¹.

‘WE were much obliged by your long letter, and we all rejoice to learn that you have a name in the Methodist Society. We trust that the God to whose blessed service you are sincerely devoting yourself will continue to provide for you in the order of His Providence. . . . That passage in the book of Job, “I know that Thou canst do every thing,” has often proved to me an unspeakable blessing.

‘I hope you will obtain a situation in London or its vicinity. To that end you will, I doubt not, use every prudent exertion. Continue to acknowledge the Lord in all your ways, and He will direct your paths. Before my appointment to the pleasing and profitable office of Assistant Editor my mind was greatly exercised, but I gave myself to

prayer, and God, "whose I am and whom I serve," made my way plain before me. The appointment in question contributed largely towards sweetening the bitter cup of affliction put into the hand of your ever-to-be-revered and excellent mother. Her best wishes still attend you, and every other branch of the family of which she was for many years a distinguished ornament.'

NOTE

George Macdonald became a member of the Methodist Society at eleven years of age, while at school at Woodhouse Grove. But after leaving school, and occupying a temporary situation in London, he appears to have given up his membership, and there were fears in the devout household that the world—the world into which he had now made his modest entry—was getting hold of him. These fears were very natural. He was a strikingly handsome youth, of genial disposition, fond of company, and likely to shine in it. Unlike his brother, who was naturally grave and sober-minded, my father's temperament was social. He

loved a joke and could tell a story well. His gifts were delightful ones, and gave charm to his character all through life ; but they carried with them sufficient peril in the case of a youth away from his home, and inevitably exposed to many temptations. But the danger, whatever it might be, was soon surmounted, and he returned to his allegiance, and to the path he had entered when a schoolboy.

There appears to have been some correspondence on the subject with his sister. On April 10, 1823, she writes to him : ‘ I well remember your dear brother quoting, a few hours before he died, with particular emphasis, “ those sweet words,” as he termed them, of our Saviour, “ Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Yes, James did meet in class for many years. He joined the Society when only eleven years old, and continued in it until he left London. While he was in London he met with Mr. Yolland, who has long since gone to heaven. I would advise you by all means to join the Society. I have no doubt you would find your doing so to be of great use to you. I think you would like Mr. Jones as a leader. I hope the next time you write

you will tell me that you have fully made up your mind to join the Methodist Society.'

Within a month of the receipt of this letter George was a member of the Methodist Society, and his life-course was practically determined.

XXXVII

TO MR. G. B. MACDONALD,
Belmont House, Turnham Green

‘PORTSEA, *December 12, 1823.*

‘WE were exceedingly happy to receive your excellent long letter, especially as it informed us that your cough was removed, and that divine subjects so deeply occupied your attention. You must not stagger at the promises through unbelief, nor lay *undue* stress upon the portion of divine joy you may experience. Be it your care and study to devote yourself to God, and He will afford you as much comfort as shall be for your final advantage. Trials, whether inward or outward, patiently borne, call into exercise grace received, and consequently contribute to its increase. In one of the last letters Mr. Wesley wrote me I well remember he said, quoting from À Kempis, “The more thou deniest thyself, the

more thou shalt grow in grace." Giving up the will to God is essential to holiness. Bishop Horne was a learned, great, and good man. I confess I am not well acquainted with his work upon *The Psalms*, but know that many speak of it in common with you in strong terms of approbation.

' We shall be exceedingly glad to see you, and I trust that your visit will not only be pleasant, but profitable to yourself and us.

' We are now in the midst of giving tickets, and consequently more hurried than usual. We have two missionaries in town on their way to South Africa. The older of them, Mr. Whitworth, who preached an excellent sermon last night at St. Peter's, was one of my pupils in the Todmorden Circuit. He is astonishingly improved since he left home; but the best of all is he seems to be without any of the *parade* of religion, and eminently pious. The other missionary is a Mr. Young, who has travelled one year. He went out from Bolton in Lancashire.

' Through mercy I am very well in health, and happy in my labours. The Van leaves London on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, at four o'clock in the afternoon, from

the Cross Keys, Wood Street, Cheapside. Muffle yourself up well that you may not catch cold.'

NOTES

I am a little surprised that my grandfather was unacquainted with *Horne on the Psalms*. Published in 1776, it was for more than fifty years the most generally popular commentary on this portion of Scripture. In May 1783, Wesley's *Journal* has this entry: 'Here I met with Dr. Horne's *Commentary on the Psalms*: I suppose the best that ever was wrote. Yet I could not comprehend his aggrandizing the Psalms, it seems, even above the New Testament. And some of them he hardly makes anything of; the eighty-seventh in particular.'

It is not necessary to disparage this *Commentary* because it is no longer read. It served its day.

Mr. Macdonald speaks of two missionaries on their way to South Africa—Messrs. Whitworth and Young.

James Whitworth, who entered the ministry in 1810, had already spent eleven years as a missionary in the West Indies. After three

years at Delagoa Bay he returned to England and the home ministry, and died in 1852.

Samuel Young, after a year's work in the Brighton Circuit, went to South Africa to take the place of the Rev. William Shaw, when that distinguished missionary carried his work into the heart of Kaffirland. Mr. Young laboured for about ten years in Africa, losing his wife and two children during that time. Returning home, he had a useful and honourable career as a minister till in 1865 he retired from active work. He died in 1884, in the eighty-eighth year of his age, and the sixty-second of his ministry.

XXXVIII

TO MR. G. B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *February 2, 1824.*

‘WE were exceedingly happy to learn by your last of your safe arrival at your destination, and that Mr. Crabb’s disappointment in not seeing you as soon as he expected was not followed by any serious uneasiness. It is a matter of importance to be punctual in the performance of every lawful engagement. “Order,” says Pope, “is Heaven’s first law.”

‘I have finished a set of resolutions to be proposed at our Missionary Meeting next Monday evening at St. Peter’s. The chair is to be taken at 6 o’clock, but whom we shall get to fill it is yet a question, as on account of the sitting of Parliament we cannot be honoured with the presence of Mr. Butterworth. We cannot hold a meeting at Southampton on account of the agitated state of

the public mind, arising from a disgraceful, noisy meeting held in that town, called for the purpose of sending a petition to Government on the subject of slavery. It seems it originated with Dissenters, and the Church party mustered their forces, and called forth all their hosts to a war of the lungs. And so powerfully did they bawl, that the famous Mr. Adkins, a Dissenting minister, was silenced. The bad passions raged so furiously that the place of the assembly might be compared to Euroclydon! A minister of the Establishment interrupted Mr. Adkins by telling him the company "did not wish for any of his preaching"; and was answered by one present, "Mr. Adkins can preach without book for hours together, but without your sermon before you you cannot preach at all!" The design of the meeting was frustrated. How consequential is the little town of Southampton! Its inhabitants remind me of the exclamation of the fly on the cart-wheel, "What a dust I raise!" Surely, as Young says, "Earth is the bedlam of the universe."

XXXIX

TO MR. G. B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *February* 12, 1824.

‘A FEW days since I wrote to you by a friend who was to post the letter in London, and I send this to you by a similar conveyance, as I wish to save you as much as possible the expense of postage. Every day I endeavour to present you to God at the throne of grace, and that several times. He, we know, can do everything, and is infinitely willing to make us holy and happy. We ought not to be discouraged in the performance of our duty in prayer from the circumstance of our being frequently straitened while engaged in it, nor omit to pray at proper times on account of any languor of soul or depression of spirit of which we may be sensible.

‘Those prayers which from a sense of duty and for the purpose of receiving fresh supplies

of grace we offer up to God, even when we feel little enlargement of heart, are acceptable to Him who would have us pray always and not faint. He can assist us in our studies, make our memory retentive, our understanding strong, our judgement discriminating, our will submissive, can regulate our imagination and direct our passions into their proper channels.

‘ I wish you to be a good biblical scholar. It might not be advisable for you at present to begin the study of Hebrew, but I hope you will in due time become master of that ancient and sacred language. Late in life as I began the study of it, I should, had I persevered in it, have been able to read it with ease and profit ; but on my going to London I had so much literary work to occupy my attention, that I relinquished it altogether. Greek, Latin, and French I continued to cultivate, and my doing so has been attended with important advantages.’

XL

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *February* 14, 1824.

‘THE sound divinity and good sense in your letter, written in a proper theological style, give me great pleasure. Your views of a right call to labour in the Lord’s harvest are, in my view, correct. But in contemplating the subject it is very possible for you to pore too much upon yourself, and by so doing to subject yourself to painful and unprofitable discouragements; discouragements that would have a tendency, if not to prevent your growth in grace, yet to injure your health, and retard your progress in science.

‘Whenever you begin to preach—and in my opinion the sooner you do so the better—you will need all the courage you can muster, as well as the aid with which you will

be furnished by the Great Head of the Church. You cannot have too much knowledge for such an exercise, but you may easily be too anxious about the language in which you convey it to others. On the subject in question the following lines by Gambold are excellent :—

Safely you speak, when with great peace of mind,
Above self-seeking raised, on God reclined,
You feel Him at once suggest unlabour'd sense,
And ope a sluice of sweet benevolence :
Some high behests of heaven you then fulfil,
Sprung from *His* light your words, and issuing by
His will.

‘Accustom yourself to speak with *ease* and *propriety* in private, and it will become habitual to you to do so in public. A strong devotional spirit, free from enthusiasm, is an admirable requisite for the pulpit. Let your heart be filled with your subject, and take sufficient time in delivering your discourse, and then you will speak to purpose. Be *calm* and *cool* in the beginning of your address, and more than ordinarily *deliberate* ; your auditors will then be easy, and disposed to accompany you. After some time your passions will begin to work, and you will

find them too eloquent. But care must be taken lest they rise to such a height as to produce extravagance of language, or too great loudness of voice. Knowledge and zeal do best when united.

‘ You know my sentiments on the subject of *repeating*, instead of *preaching*, sermons. Still, discourses should be well digested, and when this is done words will seldom be wanting. A *repeater* of sermons is a slave, and not often a man of general knowledge. But the worst of it is, he seldom gets at the hearts of his hearers ; and if *they* remain unaffected, he preaches nearly in vain, however much admired.

“ ‘ Soldiers,’ said Marshal Ney, when brought forth to be shot, “ *aim at the heart !* ” I need not tell you the use to make of that sentence.’

XLI

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *April* 1, 1824.

‘WE were all exceedingly pleased to receive your long, excellent letter. Though the effect produced by the gospel of Christ upon believers constitutes the most decisive proof of the truth of Christianity, it is of great importance to be well acquainted with the other proofs which have been often, and with good effect, urged in its favour. Still, after all our discussions, we shall find that faith “is the gift of God.”

‘He is no doubt well pleased when we make a right use of our reasoning powers, in due submission to what He has revealed in the Scriptures. But this submission does not imply that we are bound to believe any proposition that is contrary to reason, though none such can possibly be found in a revelation dictated by the Spirit of truth.

‘ Dr. Priestley ranked the doctrine of the Trinity amongst the greatest absurdities ever maintained, and said he would no more read a treatise in proof of it than one in favour of transubstantiation. His decision on this point is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural, for in making it he assumes that he has as clear and distinct ideas of the Incomprehensible Jehovah as he has of body. Humility, uprightness, and purity of intention dispose our minds to embrace revealed truth without subjecting it to the rack of reason, which in the hands of some of the greatest geniuses has proved itself fallible with a witness !

‘ I wish you to read Wesley’s Sermon on the Trinity, which, for its length, is the best on the subject I have ever perused. Grotius’s *Defence* may be considered as the father of modern Apologies for Christianity. If you have that work in Latin, I wish you to give it a careful reading, not neglecting the notes. It is as great a masterpiece on the subject of Divine Revelation as is that of Sherlock on Divine Providence. Natural and acquired abilities for the purpose of eminent usefulness in the ministry were never more necessary than in this age of light and general improve-

ment. Still, we must never forget that it is the Spirit that quickens, nor that the learning and philosophy of Bacon and Newton, joined to the eloquence of Demosthenes and Cicero, would effect no more in the conversion of a sinner than a sounding brass or tinkling cymbal.

‘Enthusiasm, understood in a good sense, does not seem to differ from zeal, without a measure of which either a young or an old preacher, whatever his attainments in knowledge may be, will labour to little purpose.

‘I am constitutionally lively, and so are you, and that natural warmth, when sanctified, is calculated to make our pulpit addresses more impressive than they would be were our complexion phlegmatic. It has been of great use to me through every stage of my ministerial career. Saurin is an excellent model for a preacher, on account of his clearness, energy, and faithfulness. He has been reckoned by some to be too florid in his style ; but he does not appear so to me, and perhaps this may be accounted for by my reading him in his own language. But I would have *you* to be an original. Your natural and acquired advantages are great and many, so

that if you devote yourself wholly to God, and give yourself up to reading and study, you will be fitted for eminent usefulness.

‘ The Quarterly Meeting is to be held on the 5th instant. I know nothing either for or against my staying here another year. “ My fate,” as Hector said, “ depends on heaven.” ’

‘ P.S.—I have had some thoughts of writing an answer, to be contained in a shilling pamphlet, to Edwards *On the Bondage of the Will*. I think I understand the subject, and metaphysics generally, sufficiently to answer that work that has long been pronounced *unanswerable* ! Think : is this worth attempting, or ought I to cease using that weapon of the pen ? ’ ’

NOTES

These two letters show how the hope and affection of the writer were now centred in his younger and only surviving son. Mr. Macdonald was now sixty-three years of age, and his son George was in his nineteenth year. The strain in which he writes is not that of his letters to his elder son, in which, as we have seen, there was something akin to com-

radeship, a sharing of ideas and sentiments, and a frequent inviting of criticism and counsel as from an intellectual equal. The early maturity of the younger James Macdonald, his exceptional gravity and ripeness of character, made this possible. But to me, at least, it is very touching to observe how, as George Macdonald advanced to manhood, his father was quick to recognize his bright and hopeful qualities, and how eagerly he set himself to guard and guide their development. His own course was drawing to a close, but he lived long enough to see something more than the promise of his younger son's career—a career that gave to his later days their greatest happiness, and was subsequently to expand into a ministry of great popularity and usefulness.

It is well known that for many years after the date of these letters Methodism made no systematic provision for the training of its ministry. Mr. Macdonald was himself a self-trained man in the best sense of the term, and by his own labours rose to distinction among his brethren as a theologian and a scholar. If there were no means of securing for his son George academic advantages, he would at

least set before him a high standard of mental equipment, and put him in the way of attaining it.

There is a little iteration and urgency in his exhortation to studies of a somewhat severe kind, as though he discerned something in his son's temperament that called for it. George Macdonald had in him more of the orator and less of the student than his father, and, though a good scholar for his years and his opportunities, had instincts and aptitudes for public speaking .

That loudly knock'd to have their passage out.

Hence his father directed his counsels mainly to the side of things that most needed to be strengthened.

The counsels that he gave concerning preaching are, I think, admirable, and are in accord with those of the best masters of the art.

XLII

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *April* 25, 1824.

‘It gives me great pleasure that you have begun to preach. If, as Cicero maintained, in order to be a good orator a man must be truly virtuous, how much more necessary must it be for a man who would be successful as a preacher of the gospel to be entirely devoted to God. What constituted the great excellence of Archbishop Leighton? Not his learning, though in that he was not deficient; but his eminent piety. It is the Spirit that quickeneth; and without His blessed influence all talents, however splendid, are no more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. The work of the ministry is, in my estimation, of all others the most honourable, and it would give me more pleasure to find you a faithful minister of the gospel than to see you in the

Egyptian Hall hailed Lord Mayor of London. Wilkes and some others who were no ornaments of either civil or religious society have filled that office ; but to be an ambassador of God is honour indeed, an honour far superior to what Kings and Emperors can bestow. . . . God still fixes the bounds of our habitation, and therefore I doubt not He will appoint me to whatever place, taking the whole of my existence into the account, shall be most to my advantage. I have trusted in Him and have not been confounded. No one, perhaps, during my short span has more ground than I to record divine providences in his favour. He has made crooked paths straight, and rough places smooth before me. These things has He done, and not forsaken me.

‘ I have had recently a touch of the rheumatic gout, but I have not preached one sermon less on its account. It is now nearly gone, and I trust will soon be entirely removed. I am just about going into the pulpit ; you will therefore excuse my proceeding farther at present.’

XLIII

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *May* 17, 1824.

‘ I THANK you for your long, and in every way satisfactory, letter. It contained, as you justly conjecture, the first intelligence I received concerning the late missionary meeting at City Road Chapel. A man of far inferior talents would have enjoyed more self-possession than Mr. Irving did upon the occasion. He must indeed be a strange compound, and one who will have few imitators. How different are his orations from the plain, unadorned sermons delivered by Whitefield ! Whether, were he to appear upon a common near a populous town or city, he would be so popular, is with me a question. The power of God attended Whitefield’s preaching, so that wonders were effected by it in the conversion of many sinners, but I

do not hear that many are turned from the error of their ways by Mr. Irving's instrumentality. But be these things as they may, he ought to learn to keep within the bounds of sobriety. Should he proceed as he has lately done, he must fall a martyr, without a miracle, to bodily exertion, "which profiteth little." His preaching as he recently did at Tottenham Court Road Chapel, for three hours and a half, is no proof to me of his sense or discretion. He must, I think, be partially deranged. In this supposition I should be sorry to be uncharitable. Young says that "madness rarely fails to be witty"; but if Irving be tinged with it, it is neither of the dull nor the witty kind, but a sort of medley partaking of both. His speaking of a certain poet "harping another string in eternity" is, if not witty, something absurd, which, with many, answers the same purpose. He seems to have been born to say much himself, and to afford others to say more. I think of Orator Henley, of whom Pope says,—

Still break the benches, Henley, with thy strain,
While Gibson, Hare, and Sherlock preach in vain.

'I quite approve of your making every

preparation for the pulpit compatible with your not being a slave to words and phrases. You justly observe that a preacher, whether young or old, ought previous to his ascending the pulpit to be familiar with the leading ideas of his discourse. A modern writer says, "A man does not write a book because he is wise, but he is wise because he has written a book." Nothing, I am persuaded, tends more to improve the mind than composing carefully.

'I am glad that you choose plain texts, and lay them out in a few natural divisions. Habit in speaking from the pulpit will tend to banish all *unnecessary* anxiety with respect to acquitting yourself properly. The powers of the mind are capable of astonishing and indefinite improvement. What a prodigy was Cicero, who, in a comparatively short time, wrote so many works worthy of immortality ! I should like to see his work, recently published, which was found in the Vatican at Rome. I hope it will not turn out like the pretended plays of Shakespeare, in the composing of which a young man amused himself, and for a time imposed them upon the public. No matter !

'Your course of reading pleases me much ;

but still I advise you to cultivate the classics. They will help you to think, and form your style. Compose with sufficient leisure, and in time you will compose rapidly. For this Priestley was famous. *Assiduitas omnia vincit!*

‘I am astonished to find Mr. Watson on almost every difficult subject think in conformity with myself; a proof, as we do not copy from each other, that we draw our sentiments from the fountain of truth.’

NOTES

The name of Edward Irving will be familiar to all who are acquainted with Carlyle’s writings, or with the literature that has gathered round his memory. His once commanding and impressive personality has, however, receded, along with the events with which he was connected, and with controversies and phases of thought that have passed away. For a time he was one of the most notable men of the day—a religious leader whom many regarded as a prophet, an orator whose spell the most critical and fastidious could not resist, a preacher whose presence, voice,

and manner awed and fascinated his hearers, while his utterances stirred a usually languid and easy-going generation to at least temporary concern for spiritual things. His career cannot here be traced. The *Life* by Mrs. Oliphant, which appeared in 1862, tells the noble, sad, pathetic story in sufficient detail, and with much sympathy and insight. He died in 1834, at the age of forty-two. In July 1820 Coleridge wrote to his nephew, Edward Coleridge: 'Irving, the Scotch preacher, certainly the greatest orator I ever heard, is a man of great simplicity, of overflowing affection, and enthusiastically in earnest.' About the same time he refers to him as 'the super-Ciceronian, ultra-Demosthenic pulpiteer.' In November 1825 Crabb Robinson notes in his diary, 'We went to Irving's church. He kept us nearly three hours. . . . But his eloquence is captivating. He speaks like a man profoundly convinced of the truth of what he teaches. He has no cant, hypocrisy, or illiberality.'

Cicero was my grandfather's favourite classical author, more frequently quoted by him than any other. The work here referred to was the *De Republicâ*, or rather six books of

it, which were discovered by Cardinal Mai in the library of the Vatican after being lost for many centuries. They had suffered the fate which caused the destruction of many works of antiquity, having been partially obliterated that the parchment might be used for later writings. The learned book-lover, observing almost effaced characters beneath the text of Augustine's Commentary on the Psalms, succeeded in deciphering the original writing, probably of the second or third century, and to his great joy, and that of scholars generally, recovered about a fourth of the lost treatise. It was published at Rome in 1822. It was not likely to come within Mr. Macdonald's reach, but it appears that he had heard of it. A copy of it that I possess, edited by Klotz, was published at Leipsic in 1855.

XLIV

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *June* 10, 1824.

‘ I EMBRACE the opportunity of writing to you by Mr. Newstead, a missionary from Ceylon who a few days ago arrived at the port. He laboured in that island for eight years. The delicate state of his health has been the cause of his returning to this country.

‘ I peruse every letter from you with pleasure and profit, as I recognize in them a happy mixture of sense and piety. You have partially adopted the use of dashes, especially in the middle of a sentence. I know it is rather fashionable, but I am far from thinking that to be the slightest recommendation. Generally, where a dash is used, a comma or semicolon would answer the purpose much better. Correct punctuation is a great advantage in writing, and with some care and attention a

person of your good sense and general knowledge may in a short time become a master of it. This slight animadversion you will receive in the spirit by which it is dictated.

‘ Charles Wesley’s manuscript sermons, all of which I critically examined, were written in a plain, uniform hand, and admirably pointed. I never was such a penman as you, and being now upon the border of sixty-three I aim at no more than to write legibly. It is a matter of importance to acquire a habit of doing everything in the best manner. . . .

‘ The better you understand your subject, and the more you possess of a true devotional spirit, you will be able to deliver your discourses with the more ease, deliberation, and effect. The true medium in public speaking lies between drawling on the one hand, and rapidity on the other. The less a man is master of his subject, the more he resembles a cart-horse that is overloaded, and hence he must hurry in order to go at all. Upon the subject of speaking deliberately, I shall never forget a conversation I had with a gentleman who taught the art of elocution. But after all our reasoning upon this subject, we shall find that we speak best when we are under

divine influence. Not that we are to despise speaking as an art ; it has its great uses.

‘ It will be very useful to peruse carefully, when you find leisure for the purpose, Limborch’s *Christian Theology*. You know I have a fine copy of it in Latin. Bishop Bull’s *Vindication of the Council of Nicaea*, written in Latin, is a masterpiece, and well worthy of being studied by those who would make themselves well acquainted with Systematic Divinity. Watson’s work, from which you lately quoted a passage in one of your letters, is a very able performance, but, in my opinion, would have procured him a larger share of fame if he had not quoted so often and so largely from other works, several of which are familiar to well-read persons. Upon some disputed points in metaphysics and divinity he and I perfectly coincide. After all, I find little in him with which I have not been familiar for years. His considering the method of proving *a priori* the Being of God as of little or no value, or worse than none, meets my approbation. He is a sober, orthodox, and profound writer, and his taste and judgement are excellent.

‘ You argue well against the indulgence of

sloth, and if when you arrive at this place you can give me an effective *nostrum* for the removal of the *vis inertiae*, you will do me an essential service ! Still, that same *vis inertiae* may perhaps be downright laziness. I am of opinion, with one of old Jacob's sons, that rest is sweet, but am no advocate for ignoble sloth, though I am apt to say with Young—

Wisdom came, a hoary dame,
And told me pleasure was in rest.

I have been recently at two public meetings of the Dissenters, and at both the one and the other I spoke for about half an hour. There is a considerable share of good sense as well as piety amongst them. They and I love as brethren. We had a very pleasant District Meeting, but did not find in the whole district one young man to be recommended as an Itinerant Preacher. Mr. Ingle would gladly go to Conference, but his proposal was overruled. Mr. Stamp goes as our Representative ; whether another will go from all the District is doubtful. I say doubtful, because Mr. Fowler, from Southampton, talked of going. . . .

‘ The voice may by habit be increased to

an almost incredible degree of strength ; witness the mad woman in Ireland, who by continuing to talk aloud in the open air so strengthened her voice that she could make herself heard at the distance of two miles. Now, as the Irishman said, “ She made too much of it ! ” Mr. Robert Newton’s voice is excellent. By the way, has he during his late visit to London taken pot-luck with his Majesty ?

‘ On Monday, the 20th instant, Mr. Robert Wood, of Bristol, is to preach an Anniversary Sermon at Portsmouth, and to go on the following day to Ryde. It is thought many in this part will, as they did last year, embrace that opportunity of visiting the Island. I have no thought of making one of the number ; whether you will, it is for yourself to decide. Let me know when we may expect you, and how long you can stay with us.’

NOTES

Mr. Newstead, here referred to, was the Rev. Robert Newstead, a man of many gifts, and an unwearied worker, first in the field of foreign missions, and then, for nearly forty

years, in the home ministry. During the nine years he spent in Ceylon he translated the entire New Testament into Indo-Portuguese, and composed or compiled a hymn-book in the same language that remained long in use. He was also a pioneer of the gospel in the ancient native kingdom of Kandy. He died in 1865, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, and the fiftieth of his ministry.

The name of Richard Watson is one of the greatest in the history of Methodism. The contemporary of Adam Clarke and Jabez Bunting, he moved on as high a level as either of them. Great in gifts, attainments, and character, he was a principal ornament of the ministry to which he belonged, and a source of intellectual and spiritual strength to the Connexion. His *Theological Institutes* were the first scientific presentation of Methodist theology. They became the textbook for the theological training of the Methodist ministry throughout the world, and will always have honourable mention in the history of systematic divinity. But Mr. Macdonald's criticism is not an unjust one. Had Mr. Watson possessed more literary ambition, he would not have introduced into his *Institutes* such nu-

merous and lengthy quotations, even from the best of writers. He was more than competent to fill his pages with what was entirely his own. He died in 1833, in the thirty-seventh year of his ministry.

XLV

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘PORTSEA, *August* 10, 1824.

‘I TAKE the earliest opportunity after receiving a copy of the printed “Stations” to inform you that I am appointed Superintendent of the Devonport Circuit, which formerly went by the name of Plymouth Dock. It contains upwards of a thousand members, and is the only circuit in that District which pays its way. A Mr. Beal, who formerly laboured here, and of whom I hear a very pleasing account, is appointed my helper. He has travelled about fifteen years. Mr. Francis Truscott, who has travelled thirty-eight years, is Chairman of the District. This circumstance affords me some pleasure, as it will save me from much care and anxiety. Mr. Myles is appointed Supernumerary for Liverpool. Messrs. Joseph Collier, Pearson,

and Captain Hawtrey are to labour here. You will be sorry to hear that Mr. Martindale died last Friday night at Leeds of cholera morbus. Surely, "in the midst of life we are in death." I hear that about sixty preachers are called out to travel this year, and that in Great Britain we have had an increase of more than seven thousand members during the last year. We intend to go by the steam-packet to Devonport; it is a pleasant and cheap mode of conveyance. Mr. Stamp is to be Governor of Woodhouse Grove Seminary. I have now mentioned most of the appointments in which you will take an interest, and, trivial as they may appear to many, we may justly say—

These little things are great to little men.

Your sermon at Gosport, as far as I can learn, to use a modern phrase, gave universal satisfaction. Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Webb, a host in themselves, speak of it in terms of unqualified praise. These things I mention for your encouragement, not to make you believe, with Gil Blas, that you are "the eighth wonder of the world." Only devote yourself to God, and you will be honourably and usefully employed in a work to which, I doubt

not, Gabriel himself would rejoice to be called. What work more glorious than that of proclaiming the everlasting gospel ! Read again, and in Greek, St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, and make it your great business and study to attend to the things they contain. Now is the time for you to acquire such holy and sober habits as will enable you to adorn the ministerial office.'

XLVI

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *September* 13, 1824.

‘HAVING spent three Sundays here, I of course know more of it and of the people than I did when I last wrote. I have been favoured with good health since my arrival, and a considerable degree of liberty in preaching to excellent congregations. The people hear with great attention, and some of them evidently feel the truths delivered from the pulpit. The great mass of the Society here, as in most other places, are comparatively poor, fully as much so, apparently, as at Portsea. The prayers are regularly read in our three principal chapels on the forenoon of every Lord’s day. I have already met several classes, and found the members in general both pious and intelligent. They, with some exceptions, speak remarkably well. None of them say, I *teaches*

a school, or I *learns* grammar ; nor do we hear them say *weal*, *winegar*, *wirgins*. The latter sort of blundering they leave to London and Portsea.

‘ 10.45 p.m. I was meeting classes this evening from half-past six till about nine, after which I supped with Mr. Williams, a bookseller and printer, whose child I baptized in the afternoon. He had invited Mr. and Mrs. Beal, together with several other pious and intelligent friends, to meet me on the occasion. Our conversation was rational, civil, friendly, and substantially religious. Mr. and Mrs. Williams are a friendly, well-bred pair. He was once in Society, and will, I hope, be again shortly.

‘ To-morrow, if the Lord spare me, I shall for the first time visit a part of Cornwall, which I am to pass to over the briny ocean. I believe a good Providence appointed me to labour here, and favoured me with an intelligent and affectionate fellow labourer. He is a young man whose mind is formed upon a superior scale, and who has taken considerable pains to improve it. He knows French well, and has some knowledge of Latin and Greek. Learning is *good* and *useful*, as

the Roman Catholics say, but not an *essential* requisite for the ministry. It is natural for you, at present, to set too light an estimate on that acquisition ; but there will come a time when you will see fully the value of it. A thorough persuasion of this leads me to advise you to pursue your classical studies, but still in subordination to such pursuits as are intrinsically superior. Your temperament is sanguine ; hence the necessity for varying your studies. Experience will teach you many things of which no directions of mine can at present give you an adequate idea.

‘ Tell me in your next how often in the month you preach. You will do well to make yourself acquainted with Fletcher’s works. He was certainly master of the subject on which he wrote so much and so ably. Still, I would advise you to have as little as possible to do with controversy, always keeping in mind that the establishment of truth is the best refutation of error. . . . Make yourself master of a pure, manly, theological style. Take time in preaching, and stand sufficiently erect, that your lungs may take in a sufficient quantity of air. The better you understand and arrange your subject, the more capable

you will find yourself of being *deliberate*. Sound the consonants well ; in doing this you cannot avoid sounding the vowels. Do not study intensely before going into the pulpit. It drinks up the animal spirits, a considerable portion of which is necessary in order to preaching comfortably. In short, go into the pulpit in a devotional spirit ; but take care that you do not *tear a passion to rags*.'

XLVII

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *November 6, 1824.*

‘THE anxiety consequent upon preaching chiefly from memory is sufficient to injure the constitution of any man of strong understanding, lively imagination, and warm affections. Had I adopted that method, and continued to act upon it, I should not be at this day the man of general knowledge that I am—nay, I am inclined to think that I should many years ago have terminated my earthly career. But in avoiding this bad and dangerous extreme, its opposite, that of not making due preparation for the pulpit, ought carefully to be shunned. There is vice in all extremes. In learning to preach extempore, as in learning to walk, some accidents are for a time unavoidable; but they operate powerfully towards forming a habit which will generally preserve those who acquire it from such

mortifications. If some of the Greek Sophists and Rhetoricians could without any premeditation argue plausibly for, or against, any proposition, how much more capable ought a minister of the gospel to be to inculcate every doctrine and precept of Christianity of which he possesses a competent knowledge.

‘A sermon is never expected, as a composition, to possess the excellence of an epic poem, or that of one of Cicero’s written orations; for I believe they are not verbatim such as he delivered; they came afterwards under his judicious and correcting hand. There is one style for the eye, and another for the ear. The old Nonconformists, who paid less attention to their style than to their matter, were abundantly more useful than their successors, not even excepting their silver-tongued Bates, their Neale, Watts, and Doddridge. You ought not, on any occasion, to preach thrice in one day. Overdoing is undoing. “In your private conversation,” says Sheridan, “correct your faults as much as possible, and in the pulpit forget you have any.” This is easier said than done; but it does not on that account cease to be a good general rule,’

NOTES

By the Conference of 1824 Mr. Macdonald was appointed Superintendent of the Devonport Circuit, to which he removed from Portsmouth early in September. He had spent two years in Portsmouth, at this time the usual period of service in a circuit. It is worthy of notice, in view of the practice that has since prevailed, that Mr. Macdonald, though a minister of distinction, never had a three years' appointment in the whole course of his ministry. His period of active service was now drawing to a close. Devonport was his last appointment, and after two years spent there he became a supernumerary. He was now in the forty-first year of his ministry, and the sixty-fourth year of his age.

His counsels to his son respecting his studies, his preparation for the ministry, and the methods to be adopted in preaching and public speaking, will, I think, be recognized as showing much wisdom and good sense. And there is something, to me at least, very touching in this concentration of hope and desire on his only surviving son, whose course in the ministry was to begin as his own con-

cluded. In one respect, at least, his precepts and exhortations had notable fulfilment. In all that concerned voice, delivery, elocution in the best sense of the word, his son, my father George Browne Macdonald, was unsurpassed, if indeed he was equalled, by any of his contemporaries. Though his voice has been silent wellnigh forty years, the tradition of its power and beauty still survives.

Mr. Macdonald asks his son how often in the month he preaches. George was then a local preacher in the Hammersmith Circuit, and resided at Turnham Green. Curiously enough I have the means of answering the question as to the number of my father's pulpit engagements about this time. I have before me the Plan of the Hammersmith Circuit from January 23 to July 17, 1825. From this it appears that he had preaching appointments, in all cases morning and evening, or afternoon and evening, on thirteen Sundays out of the twenty-six, thus making an average of one service a week. His appointments were at Brentford, Twickenham, Richmond, Isleworth, Mitcham, Harrow, and Hounslow.

Another document belonging to those days

is also in my possession. It is a Society ticket for March 1824, bearing the name of 'Geo. McDonald.' On the back of it is the following inscription—

'March 14, 1824. Rec^d from Mr. Pipe Sen^r. I heard this blessed man preach twice from Phil. i. 9-11. I felt my soul all the day unusually drawn out after God, and a sweet peace and confidence in my own mind that I was accepted of Him. God grant that this next quarter I may live more to Him.—G. B. Macdonald.'

He was at the time not quite eighteen and a half years old.

XLVIII

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *December* 30, 1824.

‘YOURS of the 10th inst., as it contained an account of your restoration to perfect health, so as to be able to preach, without inconvenience to yourself, thrice in the course of one day, afforded us unspeakable pleasure.

‘I began to preach when about your age, though destitute of many of the advantages which you possess. My stock of knowledge was small, but I had a warm heart and (pardon this piece of egotism) a strong, discriminating mind. Both of these, through the divine blessing, capacitated me for mental improvement. My memory was exceedingly tenacious, and my imagination was, to say the least, sufficiently soaring. These things, with the addition of my being young, and in earnest while in the pulpit, procured me such popu-

larity as I did not merit. But notwithstanding my ignorance of ten thousand things, He who chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, deigned to make me an instrument in the awakening of sinners, and in the edification of such as had through grace believed. I was naturally volatile, and often sprightly to excess ; and yet I had the happy art of so conducting myself when in the company of the most grave and pious as to procure their esteem and affection. . . . Last Christmas Day being Saturday, I had the usual labours of Sunday to perform on it. I preached at six in the morning, read prayers and preached at 10.30 a.m. and preached in the evening. The next day I read prayers, and preached three times. After these two days' labours I was sufficiently wearied. I am far from blaming you for taking a view of Windsor Castle and of Eton. With you, I believe that His late Majesty, of happy memory, was truly religious. No wise man will envy kings. For,

What is a king ? *A man condemned to bear
The public burden of a nation's care.'*

XLIX

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *February* 16, 1825.

‘ You judge aright when you conclude that we are all much interested in your welfare ; and may rest assured that nothing shall be omitted on our part which can contribute to your happiness. You may have often heard me say that I have never, with respect to this life, been able to look far before me, and that I have seen all my earthly comforts hang by a slender thread. But that thread, however attenuated, is *cord* and *cable* as long as Infinite Wisdom wills it to remain unbroken. The delicate state of your health sensibly affects us all, but I trust that “ by the sadness of our countenance our hearts shall be made better.” We are all in the hands of God, every part of whose government is wise and good. “ I know,” said Job, “ Thou canst do everything.” He can, I trust will, strengthen your con-

stitution, and spare you for many years to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. If upon mature deliberation, after consulting my dear friend Mr. Hunter, you deem it necessary, or even expedient, for the sake of your health to give up your present situation at midsummer and return home, you will be heartily welcomed, and we shall all endeavour to make you comfortable. On that subject I would have you make your mind quite easy.

‘ You ought not to preach more than once a week, and then neither loud, nor with much passion, nor more than forty minutes. You form ideas too exalted of the qualifications *necessary* for the ministry. Were you to go to a circuit immediately after the next Conference you would find no difficulty in providing for the pulpit. I was alarmed on going to Londonderry, where I had to preach twenty times in every four weeks to the same congregation, but in less than a quarter of a year all my difficulties vanished. With a substantial knowledge of the principles of religion, we may by moderate study preach with profit to ourselves and others on all subjects fit for discussion before a popular audience.’

L

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *February 21, 1825.*

‘HAVING to preside at a Missionary Meeting at St. Austell to-morrow, where I expect to meet Messrs. James and Anderson from London, by one of whom I intend to forward this letter, I sit down with pleasure to write to you on such subjects as may occur to my mind.

‘The mind affects the body to an amazing extent, and *vice versâ*. A large portion of divine love, which is always accompanied with a proportionate share of holy, sober joy, has a direct and powerful tendency to prevent, and even to remove, such chronic diseases as after long continuance generally mock the power of medicine. But in order to be holy, and consequently happy, we must not pore too much upon ourselves, but avail ourselves

of that covenant of mercy under which we are brought to the God of all grace ; a covenant on account of the possession of which our sincere obedience is accepted in the place of moral perfection. Toward this perfection we ought steadily to be advancing, though we cannot fully attain it in the present world. I do not mean we cannot attain that perfect love which casteth out fear ; but even those by whom this is attained neither do nor can answer all the demands of the moral law, a perfect law that has never been repealed ; and they need daily and hourly to avail themselves of the mercy of God through the merits of Jesus Christ. And yet when these sober and spiritual truths are admitted, it will appear that there is a gulf between the weakest babe in Christ and the most refined mere moralist, however orthodox. The blessed doctrine of grace practical Antinomians abuse to their own injury and that of others ; but we must use it in order to be holy and happy. There is a sense in which the flesh will always, while our souls are invested with it, *desire* against the Spirit ; hence the necessity of watching continually over our passions and senses that they may be kept in due sub-

jection. I am no advocate for the *necessity* of indwelling sin during this life ; but though sin may no longer dwell in us, yet we have animal bodies and passions without which we should cease to be men. I believe that Mr. Brainerd and other holy Calvinists confounded the operations of man's animal soul, termed the flesh, with innate moral corruption. You see I distinguish the animal soul from the pure immaterial spirit, which survives the animal soul and body. The more grace we possess, the more are we enabled to govern the animal soul and bring it into subjection. But as it is the bond by which, say, the immortal spirit is united to a body, it does and must remain till death.

‘As you are much better known in the circuit in which you have preached so long than elsewhere, I should like you, if it can be done, to be recommended to travel by your March Quarterly Meeting, and to be examined at the London District Meeting in May, that you may be put on the List of Reserve, to be called out to a circuit when wanted, and your health will permit. That, I trust, may be in the course of the next year. . . . Do not study too intensely. Take sufficient relaxation,

and keep at an equal distance from gloom and levity. Look at the bright side of everything, and order your affairs with discretion.

‘ P.S.—This letter is something in the style of Sallust. It leaves much room for the reader to think. The style is harsh, but I had not time to make it otherwise. I speak to a wise man ! ’

NOTE

I am little disposed to make any comment upon my grandfather's critical remarks respecting the ‘ animal soul,’ and its relation to the body on the one hand and the spirit on the other. I might, perhaps, show that he has anticipated some later writers in his distinctions, but it is hardly worth while. Those who care to get at the root of the matter will, I think, find themselves not very far from him, as against the extremists in either direction. He was essentially a moderate man, and I am glad to be, in this respect, not only his descendant, but his successor, in other times and under other conditions.

LI

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *March* 26, 1825.

‘IT is well, without anxiety, for you to endeavour to be as well prepared as possible for an examination at the District Meeting. The method you have adopted for that purpose meets my entire approval. The dignity of Christ’s Person, consequent upon His being both God and Man, stamped an infinite value on His sufferings for a fallen world. He made, as we find in the Communion Service, “by His oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” This definition, if such it may be called, differs little from your own, but it is more full, and bears the stamp of high human authority. As a Divine Person, being both God and Man in one Christ, He answered all the demands of the moral law, magnified it

and made it honourable in such a sense as none of His followers ever did, or could do, and yet He suffered as if He had sinned. In doing this He rendered it practicable for men to be saved in strict accordance with infinite justice and infinite mercy. Were men to be saved by the mere extension of mercy, and consequently without an adequate atonement, it must be, as far as we can conceive, at the expense of justice, which in God is an infinite attribute. And were they to be dealt with, independent of the Atonement in question, according to justice, mercy would be infringed. But both these attributes, through what Christ has done and suffered, sweetly harmonize, so that God can be just as well as merciful while He justifies every true believer. I think you will find these observations consonant with the Scripture of truth. I have written them in haste, and hence they are not as well expressed as I could wish. I recommend to you a sermon of Faber's on the subject. It is contained in the volume you took with you from Portsea.

‘No doubt Dr. Clarke will occupy the place of Chairman at your District Meeting. He will treat you with the affection of a father.’

LII

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *April* 23, 1825.

‘I HAVE considered the matter with care and attention, both as a Christian and a parent, and the result is you have my full consent to go to the East as a missionary. I know not but I would prefer your labouring there to your travelling in England. I do not, however, like the idea of your going to Palestine, nor of your going in a single state to Ceylon. Of the former appointment I wish you to give up every thought, and that for reasons which appear to me satisfactory. Declining a particular station is not taking your destination out of the hands of Providence, or of those who are instruments to decide upon your appointment. Few men ever gave themselves less trouble than I with respect to where they should labour ; but still I would at any

time have remonstrated against what I considered an unsuitable Circuit. Let us use our reason for all the purposes designed by Infinite Wisdom in giving it. Our doing so is not setting it up in opposition to faith, to which it is a necessary handmaid.

‘ Meantime, I am aware that in a multitude of proper counsellors there is safety. After receiving all the light you can secure, you must ultimately decide for yourself, and I trust you will come to a right decision.

‘ It is impossible for you to possess too much religion, which consists in pure love to God and all mankind ; but you may err in your pursuit of such strong devotional feelings as, though connected with genuine piety, make no part of it ; and to this extreme you may be disposed by your sanguine temperament. Thomas Walsh split upon this rock, and became a martyr to loud, long, and too earnest preaching. You will not misunderstand me by imagining that in a sober, scriptural sense, any man can be too much in earnest in delivering the eternal truth of God. No, that is impossible, but there may be too much mental and bodily exertion. Mr. Wesley, by whose ministry the great Head of the Church effected

wonders, preached with as little human passion as I feel in ordinary conversation. Mr. Moore said once in my hearing that he would give little for a young preacher when entering upon his work, unless he were half mad. This was a hyperbolical expression not to be understood to the letter. Still, there is a proper medium betwixt Mr. Moore's half-mad preacher, and him who treats divine subjects with the coolness of a mathematical professor. At that medium I wish you to aim.

' Our knowing that all second causes are in the hands of God, and that He will direct them for His people to the best end, neither does nor can destroy our feelings, nor take away all difficulty in the exercise of faith. Our Blessed Lord knew with absolute certainty that He was to be crucified at Jerusalem, and "set His face steadfastly" to go there ; and yet previous to that event He was "amazed," was "sorrowful even unto death," and offered up His prayers to God "with strong crying and tears." The certainty of arriving at a given place, though highly encouraging, does not take away all the difficulties of a journey there.

' You have no cause to be anxious about

your Examinations next Wednesday. I know all about it, but I cannot put my old head on your young shoulders, nor would yours at my time of life sit gracefully upon me.'

NOTE

The name of Thomas Walsh is one of the most notable and honoured in the early history of Methodism. He was an Irishman and an Irish-speaking man, and a Roman Catholic by birth and training. As a Methodist preacher his course was brief, but of spiritual beauty and power seldom equalled. It is not too much to say that Wesley not only admired but revered him, such was his sanctity and elevation of character. Southey says of him, 'The life of Thomas Walsh might indeed almost convince a Catholic that saints are to be found in other communions as well as in the Church of Rome.' Mr. Macdonald was right as to the rock on which he split. Dr. Stevens, in his *History of Methodism*, writes: 'Thomas Walsh died a martyr, but he was self-martyred. His constitution was originally feeble, yet he used it in his mental and ministerial labours as if it were herculean.' It was to Walsh

that Wesley was referring when he said that he knew a young man 'who was so thoroughly acquainted with the Bible that if he was questioned concerning any Hebrew word in the Old, or any Greek in the New Testament, he would tell, after a brief pause, not only how often the one or the other occurred in the Bible, but what it meant in every place. Such a master of biblical knowledge he never saw before, and never expected to see again.'

LIII

TO MR. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘DEVONPORT, *May 9, 1825.*

‘YOUR passing the District Meeting with so much comfort, and we doubt not with credit to yourself, afforded us all the most cordial pleasure. I knew that you had nothing to apprehend from an examination, as, in addition to the provision you had made for such a scrutiny, I was certain that the Preachers who had to decide on your case would treat you in the most delicate and affectionate manner. I am glad that you felt cool and collected upon the occasion.

‘To-morrow morning I am to set off to attend two Missionary Meetings, at one of which I am invited to take the chair, and hence I cannot write as largely to you as I could wish, but I hope Mary Ann will supply my lack of service. As a newsmonger she is

preferable to me. I am glad that you are so well employed as to pay comparatively little attention to the important subject of the Catholic Question. Perhaps you would not now say, as you did when you were about ten years of age, that you would *beat the Papists* for asking for Emancipation. That consummation, however devoutly or otherwise to be wished, they are not likely to obtain at present. But, be that as it may, we have the comfort to know that the Lord sitteth above the waterfloods, and reigns a King for ever, and that the universe is subject to His control.'

NOTES

George Browne Macdonald was accepted as a candidate for the ministry by the London District Meeting, May 1825, and was received as a minister on trial by the Conference of that year. No further mention is made of his becoming a missionary, and a few months later he entered upon the work of the ministry in England in which he spent the remainder of his life.

Mr. Macdonald's reference to his daughter Mary Ann as a better 'newsmonger' than

himself may justify an extract from a letter to her brother accompanying that of her father.

‘ After spending the whole of this morning in washing, I with pleasure take up my pen to write to you. I long for the time when I shall have the great happiness of talking with you, for although I very much enjoy writing, yet the pleasure of conversing with you would be greater, especially this afternoon, when my poor fingers are so very stiff with washing that it is painful for me to write. This must serve as an excuse for the wretched scrawl this letter will be. Father has so often told me that a woman is never at a loss for an excuse that I am determined to make as few excuses as possible for my faults, but endeavour to amend them.

‘ Some weeks ago we had the pleasure of seeing a missionary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, who are going to Madras. Mrs. Williamson is not twenty years of age. As soon as the vessel in which they were was arrived in Plymouth Sound, Mr. Hatchard, a clergyman of Plymouth, sent to the vessel to say that if there were any missionaries on board he requested them to make his house

their home while the vessel remained in harbour. There was no other missionary on board but Mr. Williamson, who gladly accepted his kind invitation, and they were most hospitably received by Mr. Hatchard and his family.

‘I think you will be delighted with this part of the country. Mother and Bithia intend taking several excursions upon the water when you come ; but as for me, I have no such intention, as I still remain a most dreadful coward with respect to the water.

‘I am quite delighted to find that you have given up the idea of being a missionary. I never thought that your constitution was strong enough to bear the climate. I have put the shirts in a box, because I think that they will go safer. You must be sure to bring the box with you, as it is a useful little thing. If I had the packing of your things I should fill it with books.’

LIV

TO THE REV. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘GOSPORT, *September 29, 1828.*

‘YOURS of the 2nd instant afforded us all unusual satisfaction. Your not having to preach as often as when here will, I hope, prove for your mental and physical advantage. You will not often hear Mr. Bunting speak in public, or I should warn you against imitating his tone, action, or phraseology. They become him; they are excellent; but the imitation of them by any man would not fail to lessen him in the esteem of every person of judgement and taste.

‘Present my kind respects to Mr. and Mrs. Bunting, and tell *her* I still remember some of the exploits of the *Lord Nelson* and the *Trinidad*. Remember me affectionately to Mr. Watson, and tell him that I am as desirous that you may one day *successfully* support

my plan of education for the Methodists' children as ever Hannibal's father was that he should swear eternal hostility against the Romans. You have an infinitely better cause than that scourge to Rome ever had, a cause which is worthy the support of Messrs. Bunting and Watson, and of yourself not excepted. I am glad you felt so much liberty when our President heard you preach in Manchester. He knows the heart of a young man, for he was young, at Oldham, many years before you saw the light. But I think of Burke's saying, "What shadows we are," &c.'

NOTE

There is here an interval in the correspondence of more than three years. By the Conference of 1825, George B. Macdonald was appointed to the Devonport Circuit as his father's junior colleague. In 1826 Mr. Macdonald retired from the active work of the ministry, and took up his residence in Portsmouth, his son being at the same time appointed to the Portsmouth Circuit. For three years, therefore, father and son were living, if not together, at least in such close

neighbourhood that there was no need of correspondence, and it ceased accordingly. When it was resumed, in September 1828, my father was residing in Manchester (or rather, Salford), as junior colleague and assistant to the President of the Conference, Dr. Bunting.

LV

TO THE REV. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘GOSPORT, *January 1*, 1829.

‘THE beginning of this year awakens in my mind the busy train of past events, one of the most happy, as well as memorable of which is, that on June the 27th, 1789, now almost forty years ago, your most excellent mother and I solemnly promised to take each other “for better for worse.” Without entering into the particulars of her holy, wise, and honourable life, I will just observe that she did me good, and no evil, during the whole time of her being the companion of my joys and sorrows. She suffered much for many years ; but though wearisome days and nights were appointed unto her, she was substantially happy, for she possessed that joy with which strangers to God do not intermeddle. From her you received the best part of your early

education. At her death you were too young to know the loss you sustained by the painful event, an event which, for a time, bade fair to hurry me after her into a world of spirits. But I had more to enjoy and to suffer in the land of the living, and I can yet say, "My friends are round me, and my life is sweet."

'I have been recently much affected in reading Benson's *Life of Fletcher*. I was struck with the honour conferred upon me in reviewing some of the works of that apostolic man, and in having for an intimate friend his excellent biographer. Still, I wish, without any ludicrous associations, not to forget that "it is well that old people die"; and that the time will come when I shall be at rest. Had we all our ancestors still with us, we might well ask, "What shall we do with them?" In a variety of instances the tragic and the comic so tread upon the heels of each other that it is often impossible for persons of wit, which I term the quintessence of good sense, to break the association. The one is set over against the other. Still, it is better to go to the house of mourning than that of laughter. . . . I hope, and that ere long, to lay out my strength upon something not unworthy the

attention of my own family and friends. I seem, like Dr. Johnson, to think that want of the necessaries of life is the only sufficient stimulus to write for the press ; but that excitement a kind Providence has withheld from me. I may be favoured with one equally powerful. In fine, I hope to consign to you some of the labours of my pen.'

LVI

TO THE REV. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘GOSPORT, *January 9, 1829.*

‘WE all continue well and comfortable, and while a man can say so with truth, he has, even according to Cicero, matter sufficient for a letter to a friend. No doubt you enjoyed with Mr. Toase, at Derby, the “feast of reason and the flow of soul.” He is an excellent man, and so is Mr. Rogers.

‘Your friends in this circuit inquire after you with the greatest affection. I cannot pretend to give you the names of one-tenth of them. Mr. Davidson’s little daughter was resolving to send you by coach her missionary box, with upwards of nine shillings; and her father says that when you appear in this chapel you will be smothered by the congregation. These are strong words, but there is generally something extravagant in love.

‘Horsley’s *Sermons* are excellent, being evangelical in sentiment and well written. He was a strong man, armed with weapons too powerful for Dr. Priestley’s coat of mail to repel. But, from the character of his lordship for severity, I should hardly have expected him to treat the philosophic doctor with so much civility. In comparison of Bishop Warburton, he was a civil, well-spoken man. I wish you to read with care and attention the work I have referred to.

‘All Paley’s works deserve to be occasionally read, as they abound with important truth expressed in a pure, didactic style. To write so well and so much, he must have bestowed much time and labour upon his numerous performances. He is one of the first, if not the first, of our modern classics. Our Watson is very clever, but he was not so much at liberty as Paley to commit his private opinions to the press. Bishop Watson’s *Life*, chiefly written by himself, and published by his son, is worthy your perusal. Had he been more orthodox, and less democratical in his sentiments, he would probably have been translated from, as he called it, “the poorest bishopric in England.” But he was a great

and honest man, with intellectual powers capable of doing (what a Quaker said of Mr. Bradburn) all that flesh and blood could do. But we take care to refer the final decision of every man's character to the Righteous Judge. Surely, charity and orthodoxy may subsist, and that peaceably, in the same breast.

'Jeremy Taylor was one of the first and best of divines, but we cannot swallow him wholesale, nor any other writer, not possessed of plenary inspiration. I knew Mr. Bramwell well. He was a holy man, but not of extraordinary grasp. Meantime, I would not forget that moral worth alone is current coin in Eternity.'

NOTE

It will be observed that in these later years of his life Mr. Macdonald lived as much, or more than ever, among his books, and that his long-established habit of encouraging and stimulating his son to read good authors was undiminished. His hope 'to lay out his strength' upon something not unworthy the attention of his family and friends was not

destined to be fulfilled. He was now in his sixty-ninth year, and was nearer to the failure of his strength than he knew. How many men have carried into their retirement the hope of gathering up the studies and experience of a lifetime, and embodying them in a *magnum opus*, their final and adequate utterance, and in how few instances has the hope been realized !

In addition to a large number of reviews and magazine articles, the following is, I believe, a complete list of my grandfather's publications :

Strictures on Methodism, 1804; *On the Catholic Question*, 1815; *An Address to the Preachers, &c., on Christian Education*, 1821; *Memoirs of Rev. Joseph Benson*, 1822.

LVII

TO THE REV. GEORGE B. MACDONALD,
Derby

‘GOSPORT, *February* 18, 1830.

‘WE have sympathized with you and your amiable and excellent wife, and every day we address the Hearer of prayer in behalf of you both. To hope the best is manly and Christian. Our God in whose hands are our souls and bodies, and who can do everything, loves us infinitely more than we can love ourselves. How often out of weakness has He made us strong! He is the Lord God omnipotent, and I trust He will speak the word, and restore to health and strength your lovely wife, for whom I feel all the love and tenderness of a father. Give her my most affectionate love, and tell her I look forward to the time when she and I shall comfortably say to each other, as we often did, “ Good

morning to you ! ” Let no croaking gossips, however pious, converse with her for any length of time. I remember one of our half-civilized friends at Heptonstall, about two years after you were born, said to your dear mother, “ Oh, mistress, you *lobken* very ill.” I replied from the fullness of my heart, “ You are very impudent.” Such an answer all Job’s comforters justly merit. The desire and the love of life are often, in the hands of God, instrumental in procuring health and lengthening life. Tell your dear Mary that, old as I am, I still love life and enjoy it, and that is one reason why I am so well.’

LVIII

TO THE REV. GEORGE B. MACDONALD

‘GOSPORT, *January 1, 1831.*

‘YOU will see from the date of this letter that I have just entered upon my seventieth year. I have lived in a most eventful era of the world. The most extraordinary event which took place in my time was the American Revolutionary war, which paved the way to that of France in 1789, the effects of which are still in operation. Since then revolutions have been the order of the day, so that Talleyrand, who weathered many a storm, in taking the oath to Philip, said, “ This is the thirteenth oath of the kind I have taken, and I hope it may be the last.” I have lived in an age of wonders, and when I consider that every human being has a will of its own, and how much sinful selfishness prevails in the world, I look upon civil society in any form as a proof of the divine superintendence.

“I see that in the course of time habit becomes a second nature, hence the necessity of forming the best of habits. I used to wonder, when turned fifty, that Mr. Benson, my late excellent friend, should speak in the strongest terms of the rapidity with which I composed for the press. I shall never do so again, for I am so much out of the habit of writing that a letter worth sending now takes up a considerable amount of time. For everything there is a time and season, and my time for much writing is at an end. How well it is to work while it is day, and for authors in general to remember what Richard Baxter’s wife told him kindly, that “did he write less and write it better, he would come as well to his purpose.” Her capital sense and good taste led her to know that very few of his works deserve to be handed down to posterity.

‘I am sorry to say there is little prosperity of the good work in town or country. According to good old Matthew Walker, Mr. Ford is an object of pity, not envy, for he is popular. “I pity the man that is popular,” said he, “I was once popular myself.”

‘Our present Ministry promises fair, and is, I believe, well intentioned. It is very

popular, and yet, I hope, not an object of pity. They are not increasing the loaves and fishes for men in office. In a short time, if they continue in office—which I hope they will—they will make a bold effort for effecting a reform, for they are all reformers. But they will not find John Bull, unless amazingly altered, a very manageable animal. Henry Brougham, if possessed of more than the wisdom of Solomon, will want it all. We are all quiet here, and so famous is our character for loyalty and courage that it was said, when His Majesty skulked off to Brighton, that he would have found Portsmouth a place of safety. Surely, as Young says, “Earth is the bedlam of the universe.”

‘You must pay more attention to your classical studies. Your doing so would qualify you for eminent usefulness. When Hortensius ceased to cultivate polite literature he no longer kept pace with Cicero. *Verbum satis*. Labour for learning before you grow old.’

NOTE

The handwriting of this letter pathetically indicates the stage of the journey at which

the writer had arrived. It is feeble and uncertain, and wanders helplessly from the line. The writer had very imperfect command of the pen which for fifty years had been the faithful servant of his studies and labours. There was, as the later letters show, no cloud of oncoming night upon his spirit. He 'loved life and enjoyed it.' But the eventide was near, nearer than he knew. He had written his last letter.

On February 27, 1831, Mr. G. B. Macdonald received the following letter from his step-mother.

'I think it right to inform you that your dear father has had a very slight paralytic affection in his right hand. It came last Wednesday evening just as we were sitting down to tea. His speech also was partially affected. You may be sure that I was very much alarmed, but had the presence of mind to take his hand, and by well rubbing it, it soon became so much restored as to enable him to raise his cup to his mouth as usual. . . . I sent for Mr. Jenkins, for I could not cause any delay by sending over the water to Mr. Dewey. He took some blood from his right arm, and sent him some medicine, which,

with the blessing of God, did him much good. Your father had no idea of the nature, but he said to me, " My dear love, don't be alarmed, I am dying. It is all well, I shall soon be in heaven." I am truly thankful to be enabled to inform you that he is going on well, and his spirits are good. I shall only have time to write a few lines, because he has positively forbidden me to write either to you or to Mary Ann. Therefore when you write to him do not mention this letter.'

Four days later Mrs. Macdonald writes :

' At your dear father's request I write to say that he has a great desire to see you. He hopes you will come, if it is only for two or three days. Mr. Jenkins says that he is going on very well, but the complaint has very much impaired his mind, and he still finds it very difficult to articulate some words. At times he seems to feel deeply that he cannot think and converse as he could before this affliction, and wonders what can be the cause of it. I am frequently very much affected to hear him speak of himself. He often says, " I once had good sense, but I am now a fool, and can neither think nor speak." He says I must tell you that it is possible he

may get better, but should he die, he shall die happy in God.

‘Write and say when you will come. Your dear father says that he has a great deal to say to you, and that you must come while you have a father alive.’

Mr. Macdonald continued for more than two years and a half in a state of great feebleness, and died on October 13, 1833, aged seventy-two years and four months. He was buried in Gosport churchyard, in the same grave with his friend, the Rev. Joseph Agar.

A short account of Mr. Macdonald’s character and career was written soon after his death by his son. Although his letters are now his best memorial, an abridgement of this sketch may well be added to them.

‘It is to be regretted that the materials from which to give a minute account of Mr. Macdonald’s early life and Christian experience are so few.

‘His ancestors were natives of Scotland, and several of them took an active part in the agitations and struggles that marked the early part of the eighteenth century. When, after the rebellion of 1745, the Highland clans were

broken up by royal command, many of the individuals belonging to them left their own country and settled in the north of Ireland, and among them the immediate ancestors of Mr. Macdonald.

‘He was born in June 1761, near the town of Enniskillen in the County Tyrone. In a letter addressed to his children he observed: “I remember, as early as I can recollect anything, that my father and mother were anxious to teach me and the rest of their children to repeat the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed, and to answer such questions as ‘Who made you?’ ‘Who redeemed you?’ &c. But although they regularly attended divine service in the parish church, and went to receive the Holy Sacrament, they had for many years no correct views of the law or the gospel.”

‘It was a subject of delightful recollection to him in his declining years that God made him instrumental in the conversion of both his parents.

‘For about three years Mr. Macdonald preached the gospel within the limited sphere of his own neighbourhood. At the close of that period, in the year 1784, Mr. Wesley called him into the regular labours of the Methodist ministry.

‘The custom was almost universally adopted by the preachers of that day of keeping a journal in which were entered the details of their personal religious experience, and of the many engagements which occupied their time. With this custom Mr. Macdonald complied. Several of these journals of his earlier years have been found, containing in some instances facts tending to elucidate the early history of Methodism, but more especially furnishing evidence of his devotedness to the service of God.

‘The hardships and privations endured by the fathers of the Methodist Connexion can now only with difficulty be imagined. For eleven years he exercised his ministry in various parts of the north of Ireland. God gave him favour in the sight of the people, and blessed him with a considerable measure of success. In the year 1795 he came to England, and was stationed in Chester as his first circuit.

‘No man could possibly show less solicitude about his appointments than did Mr. Macdonald. His firm belief in the overruling providence of God induced contentment in whatever circumstances he was placed.

‘In the year 1811 he was appointed by the

Conference as Assistant Editor of the *Magazine*, having for his companion in office the truly venerable and learned Joseph Benson. An acquaintance of many years ripened into friendship between them, and it was no mean compliment to any man's understanding, learning, and piety to be the intimate friend of Joseph Benson. During his editorship the *Methodist Magazine* was almost exclusively under Mr. Macdonald's care. It is supposed that no editor of that magazine, except Mr. Wesley, ever contributed, in the same space of time, so many original pieces of composition to its pages as he did.

‘After being actively engaged in the service of his heavenly Master for forty-two years, he retired from public labours. It was his deliberate conviction that no man should continue in the public labours of the ministry when the infirmities of age are beginning to press upon him; and he acted according to his view.

‘The appointment of his son to Gosport determined the place of his residence. So long as his strength permitted, he preached occasionally, and continued to take an unabated interest in all that concerned the prosperity of the Church of Christ.

‘From his entrance into the ministry, Mr. Macdonald displayed an unquenchable love of reading. His journals abound with brief critical remarks upon the various works he perused. Amid the privations and discouragements of his earlier years he commenced the study of languages. With little or no assistance from others he obtained an intimate knowledge of Latin and French ; sufficient of Greek and Hebrew to read the sacred Scriptures in the original ; and enough of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese to enable him to collate the different versions of the Word of God. His acquaintance with ancient and modern history was extensive. His memory was extraordinarily retentive ; so that few leading facts of general history, or the characters and actions of celebrated individuals, escaped his recollection. With the English classical writers he was familiar, and was accustomed to quote with accuracy and feeling some of the most splendid passages to be found in them. He possessed an amazing aptitude for turning literary subjects to spiritual advantage. What the devout astronomer said as to his favourite science, “ I am going to heaven now, and taking the stars by the way,” was very appli-

cable to Mr. Macdonald's use of literature. He made all his reading subservient to an increase of his personal piety, or to the more effective discharge of his ministerial duties. He possessed conversational powers of the highest order, and few to whom such a talent is entrusted used it to better purpose. Many have been more prominent than he was in the formality of religious conversation ; but few have excelled him in the sober, rational piety which he displayed in the discussion of every subject which came before him.

‘One trait in his character was very prominent, namely, his abhorrence of evil-speaking. The views which he entertained on this subject were most decided. The law of kindness was on his lips. He possessed the charity which “suffereth long and is kind,” which “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” : the charity that “never faileth.” His consistency on this subject was beyond all praise. He was never betrayed by any company, or by any circumstances, into speaking evil of absent persons. And what he did not practise himself he would not tolerate with impunity in others. Age, or rank, or character, or sex formed no apology

to his mind for an individual violating 'the royal law' of love in his presence. There have been times when the obtuse intellect of parties so offending in his presence did not enable them to see the force of his objections against evil-speaking. His expressive countenance would then be lighted up with holy indignation, his piercing eye would be riveted upon the individual, and ordinarily some keen remark would close such conversation. He frequently quoted the words of Solomon, "The north wind driveth away rain; so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue."

'His conversation was highly instructive and pleasing, for he delighted in communicating knowledge. In the intellectual improvement of the young he took a deep interest. His society was ordinarily beloved by them; the brilliancy of his imagination, the sportiveness of his wit, and the buoyancy of his spirits giving a charm to his society not always to be found in the company of those advanced in age.

'He was an original thinker, and this gave a kind of characteristic quality to his remarks. Many of his sentences combined such terseness of thought and striking peculiarity of wording

as to impress themselves indelibly on the minds of those who heard them. Some of his observations are regarded by his friends as aphorisms, and are quoted by them as such when occasion serves.

‘ His warm and generous heart was strongly susceptible of friendship. He did not form his friendships rapidly and indiscriminately, but when once formed they were fixed. On this subject he always displayed the native independence of his mind ; he would select for himself. It was a maxim with him not to adopt as his own either the friendships or the animosities of others ; he would exercise his own judgement and act accordingly.

‘ If he had personal enemies they were unknown to him. He studied to be quiet and mind his own business, and to be in love and charity with all men.

‘ No man was less sectarian in his views. He was frequently heard to say, “ I am not so much a Methodist as to forget that I am a Christian,” and for many years he was on terms of intimate acquaintance with persons of different religious denominations.’

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